

THE CORSAIRS OF FRANCE

C. B. NORMAN



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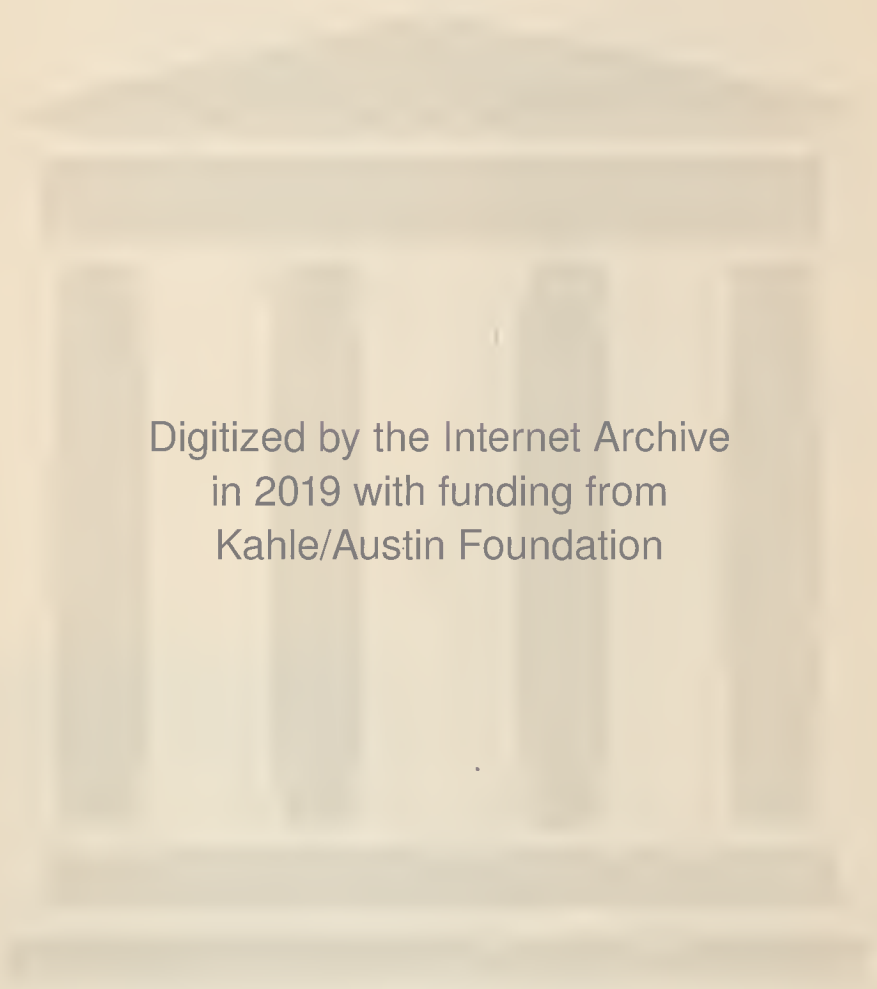
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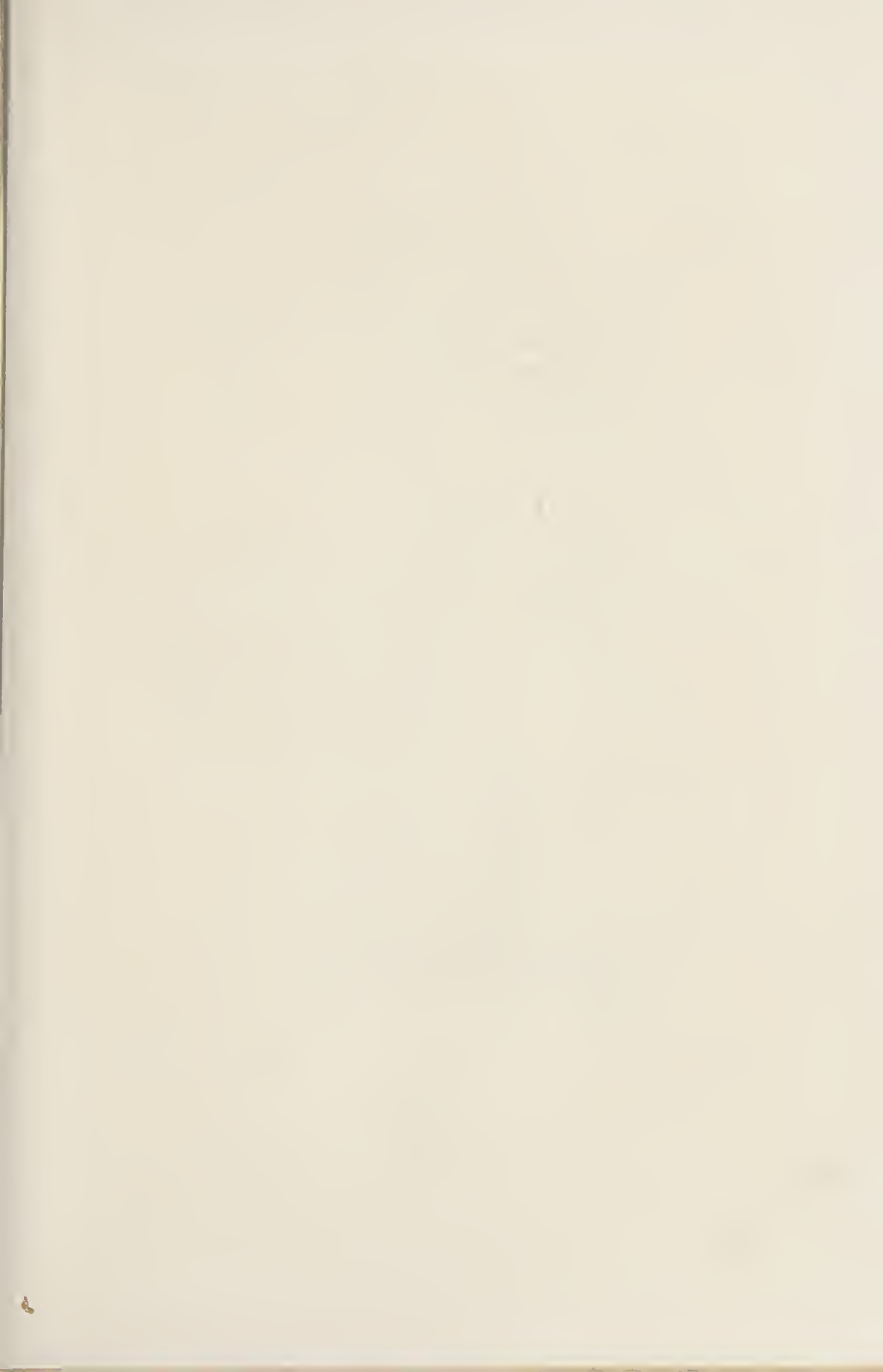


Edward Caswell



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THE
CORSAIRS OF FRANCE





Jean Bart.

THE CORSAIRS OF FRANCE

BY
C. B. NORMAN

FOREWORD AND ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
EDWARD C. CASWELL



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C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION. THE RISE OF THE FRENCH NAVY

PAGE

Exploits of French Corsairs generally unknown—Sketch of the French Navy from the Crusades to the accession of Louis XIV.—French armies transported to the Holy Land in vessels hired from Italian Republics—Louis IX. turns to his own subjects for transports—Philip le Bel collects ships from seaports of Brittany and Normandy—Charles VI. meditates invasion of England—Large ships built by Louis XII., the Duchess Anne of Brittany, and Francis I.—The *Charente*, *Belle Cordelière*, and *Caraquon*—Francis I. founds Le Havre and makes efforts to create a Navy—At his death neglect once more supervenes—Richelieu continues Francis I.'s policy—Creates arsenals and constructs ships—Mazarin in his turn allows Richelieu's efforts to be forgotten—Colbert takes the French Navy under his special protection—Vast strides made by France as a maritime power in Colbert's day—List of ships of war in 1666—*Inscription Maritime*—Letters of marque—War by Corsairs legalized and carried on under regular recognized rules—Regulations of De Valincourt—Ships considered good and lawful prizes—For-

v

malities to be observed by Corsairs on capture of a ship—Damage inflicted by French Corsairs in 1689—Prizes taken by Dunkirk Corsairs from 1656 to 1815—Value of colonial possessions to French Corsairs—England compelled to capture French colonies in order to stop depredations of their craft	15
--	----

CHAPTER II

JEAN BART OF DUNKIRK, 1650—1702

Jean Bart's Corsair ancestry—His first service under Valbué—The Judgments of Oléron—Absolute power of ship captains—Bart conveys French nobles to Ruyter's fleet—Serves on Ruyter's ship against English, 1666—Present at burning of Chatham, 1667—Leaves Dutch service and commands his first Corsair, 1674—His first prize—His success in the *Royale*—Captures Dutch man-of-war *Neptune*, 32—Presented with a chain of gold by Colbert—The minister's views on the employment of Corsairs—Bart given a large ship, the *Dauphin*—Gallant action with and capture of the *Sherdam*—Badly wounded—Granted a commission in the French Navy—Commands expedition against pirates of Morocco—Serves in campaign against Genoa and Cadiz—Promoted commander in 1686—On outbreak of war with England, 1689, commands a Corsair squadron—Captures Dutch frigate, *Seahorse*, 50—Engages and sinks an English man-of-war—Accustoms his son to the music of battle—Bart captured by the *Nonsuch*—Carried to Plymouth—Escapes—Daring crossing of the Channel—Promoted captain—Present in Tourville's fight off Beachy Head—Interview with Louis XIV. at Versailles—Defeats Dutch squadron

CONTENTS

vii
PAGE

and captures three large ships—Granted pension of 2000 <i>l.</i> a year—Defeats a second squadron—Promoted commodore—Illness and death . . .	34
--	----

CHAPTER III

JACQUES CASSARD OF NANTES

Commences life as a fisherboy off Newfoundland—Serves as a <i>mousse</i> on a St. Malo Corsair—Commands a bombship in the bombardment of Carthagera—Entrusted with the command of a Corsair by the people of Nantes—Gallant capture of the <i>William Duncan</i> —Presented to Louis XIV., and nominated to the command of a king's ship—His successes in the <i>Saint William</i> —Captures Dutch corvette <i>Catherine</i> —Makes fresh prizes off coast of Ireland—Shifts to the <i>Saint Anne</i> —Convoys a fleet of merchantmen from Tunis to France—Ingratitude of Marseilles merchants—In 1710 safely convoys a fleet from Syracuse—Captures two English men-of-war, the <i>Falcon</i> and <i>Pembroke</i> —Promoted captain in the Navy—Commands expedition to the Cape de Verdes—Ravages British and Dutch settlements in West Indies—Superseded in his command—Returns to France—Falls into disgrace—Insults Fleury—Incarcerated as a State prisoner—Dies in prison . . .	95
--	----

CHAPTER IV

DUGUAY TROUIN OF ST. MALO, 1673—1736

His birth and early career—Destined for the Church—Youthful insubordination—Ships as volunteer on the Corsair <i>Trinité</i> —His first prize—Gallantry in	
--	--

capturing the *Concorde*—Commands *Danycan*—
 Raid on Lord Clare's house at Limerick—Shifts
 to the *Cœtquen*—Captures fourteen English prizes
 —Given command of the king's ship *Profond*, 32
 —Transferred to *Hercules*, 28—Captures four
 English prizes, quells a mutiny—Promoted to
Diligence, 40—Captures Dutch ship *Panther*, 32
 —Engages and escapes from *Prince of Orange*, 50
 —After desperate fight, captured by Channel
 Squadron under Sir David Mitchell—Carried
 prisoner to Plymouth—Escapes—Given command
 of *François*, 48—Captures two English frigates,
 the *Nonsuch* and *Boston*—*Boston* retaken—Re-
 ceives sword of honour from the king—Joins
 squadron under the Marquis of Nesmond—Nes-
 mond's jealousy—Trouin leaves his squadron—
 With aid of one other Corsair captures *Defense*,
 58, *Resolution*, 56, *Black Prince*, 40, Dutch India-
 men—Ordered to Versailles—Gracious reception
 by the king—Given command of his old prize,
Nonsuch, henceforth the *Sanspareil*—His brother
 killed near Vigo—In 1698 given command of a
 small squadron by the Minister of Marine—Cap-
 tures Dutch squadron under Admiral von Was-
 senaer—At last given a commission as commander
 in the Navy—Captures the English man-of-war
Coventry, 60—Promoted post-captain—Signalizes
 his promotion by taking the *Elizabeth*, 50, and
Gaspard, 30—Given Star of St. Louis—Under For-
 bin assists in the capture of three English men-of-
 war, *Cumberland*, 60, *Chester*, 50, *Royal Oak*, 30,
 and sinks *Devonshire*, 60—Jealousy of Forbin—
 Ill-success off the Azores—Captures English ship
Bristol, 60—Granted Letters of Nobility—Success-
 ful expedition to Rio de Janeiro—Commands
 Mediterranean fleet—Made admiral and Knight
 of St. Louis—His death and character 138

CONTENTS

ix
PAGE

CHAPTER V

FRANCOIS THUROT OF BOULOGNE, 1727—1760

Thurot born in an inland town—Destined first for the priesthood, and then for the medical profession—Quits his home—Trudges across France to Dunkirk—Shows his surgical skill in a tavern brawl—Ships as surgeon on a Corsair—Captured by the English—Escapes from Dover—Enters as seaman on a Boulogne privateer—Turns honest trader—On outbreak of war commands Corsair *Friponne*—Made Enseigne de Vaisseau—Placed in command of a squadron—Gallant action with the *Southampton* frigate—Ill-success of his cruise in the *Belle-Isle*—Heavy fight with the *Dauphin* and *Solbay*—Change of fortune—Captures numerous prizes off coast of Denmark—Runs towards west coast of Scotland—Takes several fine English ships—Returns to France—Proposes a descent on the Irish coast—Project supported by the Marquis of Belle-Isle—Entrusted with the command of an expedition—Quarrels between Thurot and the military commanders—Mutinous spirit shown by his captains—Lands on north coast of Ireland—Seizes Carrickfergus—Threatens Belfast—British squadron appears off coast—Thurot re-embarks—His gallant fight and noble death 212

CHAPTER VI

LEVEILLE OF DUNKIRK

Leveillé's first cruise in command—Captures twenty English prizes—Sharp contest with two Indiamen—Captures English barque *Eliza*—After a heavy fight takes three English vessels, one the *Coldstream*, with troops on board—Carries them into

Ostend, despite efforts of English cruisers to recapture them—Renewed successes in the <i>Vengeance</i> —Offered a commission in the Republican Navy—Dislike to Government service—Given command of the Corsair <i>Psyche</i> of Bordeaux—Captures several English and Portuguese vessels—Returns to France—Pays off the <i>Psyche</i> and returns to private life	251
--	-----

CHAPTER VII

ROBERT SURCOUF OF ST. MALO, 1773—1827

Early years—Ships on the <i>Aurore</i> —Is wrecked—Promoted—Returns to St. Malo and fits out the <i>Créole</i> —Engages in the slave trade—Serves as volunteer in the <i>Jean Bart</i> in raising blockade of the Isle of France—More slaving—Escapade with the police—Turns privateer or pirate?—Commissions the <i>Emilie</i> —Captures the <i>Penguin</i> , also a rich Dutchman, the <i>Russell</i> and <i>Sam Borlase</i> —Shifts his flag to a captured pilot schooner—The <i>Diana</i> —Daring capture of the <i>Triton</i> —Action disavowed by colonial authorities—Returns to France—His acts are recognized by the Corps Législatif—Commissions the <i>Clarisse</i> —Proceeds to the Mauritius—Cruises off Sumatra—More prizes—Chased by the <i>Sybille</i> —Captures the <i>Jane</i> —Commands the <i>Confiance</i> —Still more prizes—The <i>Kent</i> Indiaman—Captain Rivington—Returns home—The <i>Ebro</i> —His marriage—Marie Blaize—Made Enseigne de Vaisseau—Refuses a command under Admiral Linois—Sails once more in the <i>Revenant</i> —Panic in Calcutta—Losses of the Indian Insurance Offices—The <i>Conception de Saint Antonio</i> —More quarrels with colonial authorities—Returns to France—Abandons the sea—Becomes owner of privateers—The last of the <i>Revenant</i>	275
--	-----



ILLUSTRATIONS

Jean Bart	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<small>FACING PAGE</small>
Louis XIV and Colbert	22
Jean Bart and His Son	72
Jacques Cassard	106
Duguay Trouin	150
François Thurot	246
Leveillé	264
Robert Surcouf	280

FOREWORD

Who is there who does not associate certain books with his youth? While many of our recollections cluster about books that are world-famous, there are other vivid and glamorous memories which cling to favorite works of ours, though of far less renown, and sometimes hardly known to the average reader.

I was delighted a short while ago to come upon a worn copy of an old book which transported me back across the years. Thinking that perhaps time had added a halo of romance to even the memory of youthful impressions, I began to look over the pages one evening with no little curiosity, and a considerable tinge of scepticism. I had laid aside an unfinished illustration, expecting to return to it shortly, but it was the milkman on his morning rounds who reminded me that I must tear myself away from these tales of the sea.

How good it was to be hobnobbing with my old friends again—Jean Bart, Jacques Cassard, Dugnay Trouin, Francois Thurot, Leveille, Robert Surcouf. Not only had they not lost the glamor of my early impressions, but in the light of matured thought they had taken upon themselves an added charm. What strong men they were! They must not be confused with the unscrupulous pirates of the Spanish Main. They were, as the author explains, in the service of the King, and preyed upon the ships of countries at war with France. As France was at war most of the time, these Corsairs had few holidays. There was a code of chivalry among them. For if a prize surrendered peaceably, those on board were treated with consideration and courtesy.

Hundreds of these prizes, however, did not submit so readily, or this book could not have been written. There were bold and fearless men in those days, besides the Corsairs, and the most terrific and hair-raising encounters ensued.

While no one can be utterly immune to the romance of life on the sea, there are those to whom it makes a special appeal, and who regard ships with a reverential adoration. They are as familiar with the rigging and parts of a ship as the modern man or boy with the intricate details of a car, and any one has but to begin his tale, like the Ancient Mariner, with "There was a ship," to have them under his spell. Ships and their life have held just such a fascination for me, and I was therefore much pleased when the publisher, recognising the high drama in these stories, and in view of my great interest in the subject, planned to re-publish this book in a new dress, and committed to me the making of the dress.

Irrespective of any special interest and familiarity with ships, I believe that these colorful biographies will stimulate the imagination. Just as we used to be taught in our school-days that whole regiments of Red-coats would fall before a hand-full of Colonials firing from behind a wall, so we have been given the impression that the Mistress of the Seas enjoyed complete and continual success in her marine encounters. Though the author is himself an Englishman, he shows in these faithful biographies that England suffered many sore defeats at the hands of the bold and clever Corsairs of France; and the tales of broad-sides, boarding, hand-to-hand fighting, and court intrigue will surely provide a thrill for the most jaded reader.

EDWARD C. CASWELL.

THE CORSAIRS OF FRANCE

CHAPTER I

The Rise of the French Navy



It may be well before entering upon the biographies of the Corsairs of France to devote a few pages to the discussion of the rules which governed their profession, and to the immense damage they caused to the commerce of hostile nations.

To the average male the performances of the Corsairs of old have ever possessed a striking fascination; the daring conception, and still more gallant execution of many of their most successful exploits, goes straight home to the hearts of those who still value personal bravery as one of the cardinal virtues.

A very general ignorance seems to prevail as to the precise footing on which the Corsair stood, and the precise nature of the warfare he waged. He is generally depicted as a rollicking dare-devil whose waistbelt was a perfect armory and whose pockets were full of doubloons. Eschewing nearer seas he sailed the Spanish main, seized all craft that came within his reach, treated

his prisoners sometimes with the utmost generosity, sometimes with the most refined cruelty, and generally ended his career by being compelled to "walk the plank" after falling a victim to a ship of war, which disguised as a "Quaker" enticed the unsuspecting Corsair alongside her well-manned decks.

Nothing could be more erroneous. The Corsair was a recognized and important factor in the wars of the past centuries. The rules which governed his conduct were clear and well defined. He fought for profit it is true, but he was not insensible to glory, and I take it in this respect the meanest Corsair that ever cruised the Channel is removed but in degree from John, Duke of Marlborough, or Arthur, Duke of Wellington.

In dealing with the Corsairs of France, one must glance briefly at the condition of the French navy at the period when the men of whom I write performed their gallant exploits, and in so doing it is impossible to avoid expressing surprise at the fact that France, with its vast extent of seaboard in the Channel, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean, should have been practically without a navy until the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Up to that time she was inferior, not only to England and to Holland, but to Spain, Turkey, and even to the Maritime Republics of the Mediterranean. In times of peace the French flag was rarely seen outside her own ports, and when, on the outbreak of war, it became necessary to raise a fleet, the monarchs of France were compelled to borrow vessels of war from neighbouring states, or to hire merchant-vessels from their own subjects and to convert them hurriedly into fighting-ships.

In the earlier crusades the forces of the western powers moved to the eastward by land; but, later on, the efflux of people to the Holy Land led to a develop-

ment of the maritime power of countries bordering the Mediterranean. The Italians were the first to profit by this. Venice shortly monopolized the trade of the East, and other cities, such as Genoa and Pisa, entered into rivalry with her. It was in ships belonging to these republics that Philip Augustus transported his crusaders to Palestine. Louis IX. made strenuous efforts to convey his own contingent on his own vessels, and a goodly number of craft were hired from the merchants of Provence and Languedoc; but he, too, was obliged to have recourse to the ports of Italy.

To this king, however, is due the birth of the French navy, for under him De Varrennes was created First Admiral of France. The crusades over, French merchants whose ships had visited eastern ports, determined on partaking with Venice and Genoa the risks and profits of Oriental trade, and Marseilles soon became one of the principal ports of the Mediterranean.

Under Philip le Bel commenced the long, long story of the struggle for naval supremacy between France and England. There were, however, no king's ships at the king's disposal, and the sovereign was compelled to turn to his shipowners and merchants for assistance. Saint Malo, Rouen, Caen, Honfleur, Havre, Dieppe, Etretat, Cherbourg, and Dunkirk, each furnished a contingent, and the admirals of Brittany and Normandy—for each province had its own admiral—lowered their flags in homage to the Admiral of France, who, by the king's order, assumed command of the whole.

Under Charles V. the French fleet, composed of squadrons from Normandy, Brittany, and Castille, under Ambrosio Boccanera, admiral of this latter province, gained a brilliant victory over the English off Rochelle, and in the following reign, Charles VI. pro-

jected one of the many projected descents upon British shores. The flag of France flew over thirteen hundred vessels of all sizes and all nationalities destined to aid in this vast undertaking. France exulted in her coming triumph; but, as in the case of the Invincible Armada, and the still more recent attempted invasion of Ireland by Hoche, the elements came to England's aid, and destroyed the frail craft that the French monarch had so carefully collected.

And now vessels of considerable size replaced the open ships which hitherto had formed the major part of the French squadrons. In the reign of Louis XII. a large ship of war, the *Charente*, was constructed; she was armed with 200 guns, and carried 1200 men. The Duchess Anne of Brittany in her turn launched a monster named the *Belle Cordelière*, and Francis I. a large two-decked ship, the *Caraquon*. Neither of these vessels fulfilled the expectations formed of them. The *Belle Cordelière* was sunk by an English squadron off Morlaix, the *Caraquon* was burnt in Havre.

Such vessels were unsuited to the requirements and beyond the means of private individuals, and their construction devolved, as a matter of course, on the state. To attempt to oppose the fine ships of England and of Holland with the small merchant-craft of Normandy and Bretagne was to court inevitable defeat, and it therefore became necessary that the sovereign should possess a certain number of large vessels of war for the defence of his maritime ports; their size and draught of water altered the whole condition of naval warfare, and in order to provide suitable ports of refuge for those vessels which were unable to enter the small ports into which smaller craft would run for safety, Francis I. occupied himself with the improvement of Havre. Up

to his reign, Le Havre had been a mere fishing-village, now its entrance was defended by towers. Basins were constructed, privileges and exemptions showered on the port, and by this means the commerce of the Channel was attracted to the mouth of the Seine. It soon became the headquarters of his northern navies.

But Francis I. did not confine his views on the reorganization of his navy to this one port of Havre. Fleets were massed in the Mediterranean, and for the first time in history, a French squadron, passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, defeated an English fleet off Brest, and then, moving round to the eastward, drove off the blockading squadrons of Henry VIII. from Boulogne.

Unfortunately the successors of Francis I. made no efforts to carry out his views as to the necessity of a powerful navy. Old ships were allowed to rot in harbor, no new vessels were built to replace them, and during the sixty years that elapsed between the death of Francis I. and the accession of Louis XIII. the navy of France may be said to have ceased to exist. Then Richelieu arose, and once more a monarch of France seconded the efforts of his minister to create a fleet commensurate with the prestige and prosperity of the kingdom.

The religious troubles which harassed France in the reign of Louis XIII. showed up in all its nakedness the feebleness of the French navy. When, in 1626, Richelieu wished to close Rochelle to English aid, he was compelled to hire twenty vessels from the Dutch. This fact made such a profound impression on him, that he at once determined to throw all his energies and all his abilities into the grave question of the constitution of a navy for France. He persuaded the king to suppress that useless sinecure, the High Admiral of France, and was himself appointed "Grand Master of the Navy, and

Superintendent-General of Navigation and of Commerce," a title long enough to warrant any result.

His first act was to insist on a certain annual sum being set apart in the Budget for the construction of ships of war and for the purchase of material to keep those already existent in proper repair. Not only did he build large ships of war as well as the almost defunct galley, but he spent vast sums in improving the harbors of Brest and Toulon. To him, also, France owes her maritime arsenals. Up to this period all vessels belonging to the king were paid off at the end of a war, the captain of each still remaining responsible for her being kept fit for commission. Having no funds for such a purpose, these duties were performed negligently enough by the majority of captains, and it almost invariably happened that when a vessel was brought forward for re-commission, she was found in such a state of disrepair that much valuable time was wasted, and large sums were spent ere she was fit for sea. Havre, Brest, Brouage, and Toulon were the ports selected as the first arsenals of France, and all ships of war were paid off in one of these places. The Admiralty official in command at the arsenal was held responsible not only for the stores within its walls, but for the condition of the ships lying up in its harbour.

Amongst other naval improvements, due to Richelieu, we should not omit the reduction of the number of guns carried by men-of-war, and the increase in the metal fired by these guns. Thus, in the days of Louis XII., we find the *Charente* carrying 200 guns and 1200 men, whereas, in the reign of Louis XIII., the vessel which struck wonder into the hearts of Frenchmen was the *Couronne*, 74, but her dimensions were far larger than the long-forgotten *Charente*. Her length was 207

ft., beam 49 ft., tonnage 2000, with a crew of 500 men. In addition to the *Couronne*, Richelieu added to the French navy two vessels of 1200 tons, and twenty ranging from 500 to 1000. In all these, in order to ensure accuracy of aim, he insisted that the gunports should be at least twelve feet apart. This, too, was a great and valuable innovation.

"At the death of Louis XIII.," writes a French historian on this subject, "the condition of the French navy bore striking testimony to the success of the Cardinal's efforts. The French flag flew in every sea. We had ports, arsenals, foundries, and a *personnel* specially trained not merely to fight, but to navigate our ships. The mercantile marine, which also had been the object of the Cardinal's particular solicitude, had made great progress. France possessed naval establishments in the West Indies, Florida, Canada, on the West Coast of Africa, and in Madagascar. The Cardinal died before his great work was finished, but it is easy to recognize, from what he had completed, whence were derived the principles that formed the foundation of Colbert's policy."

On Richelieu's death another long period of neglect arose. Mazarin allowed the arsenals to fall into ruin. No new vessels were constructed, and no efforts made to keep up the effective condition of the ships built by the late Cardinal. In the Mediterranean just enough ships were kept in commission to hold in check the pirates of the Barbary coast, whilst for operations on the shores of the Atlantic or the Mediterranean recourse was had to the fleets of Holland. The wars of the Fronde brought home to France the error of such a proceeding, for when the services of a fleet were necessary for the pacification

of Guienne only eight small ships and three convict galleys were available.

The inestimable advantages to be derived from the possession of a powerful navy, were further pressed home by the brilliant successes gained by Duquesne and Tourville. With but the small forces they were able to muster—collected chiefly, it must be remembered, from private shipowners—these two admirals, using the scanty materials placed at their disposal by the State as the foundation of their armament, hired other craft from private individuals, and by this means were enabled to hold aloft the white flag of France on seas in which, but for their forethought and gallantry, that flag would never have flown. In the last year of Mazarin's administration the French Naval Budget amounted to but 300,000*l*.

Under Colbert the French Navy took a new lease of life. His maxim, as I shall have occasion to repeat, was, "*Commerce is the source of wealth, and wealth the nerves of war.*"

Under his fostering care the two great trading companies, the French East India and French West India Company, sprang into existence and rose to wealth. In order to foster these enterprises, which he foresaw would bring the riches of the unknown world to the markets of France, he promised liberal advantages to the importers of merchandise, and escorts for the merchant fleets in times of war. These escorts necessitated a vast increase to the navy. Colbert at once set to work to resuscitate the dying glories of Richelieu's policy. Shipbuilders were engaged in England and Holland; cargoes of wood purchased in Norway and Russia. The arsenals of Brest and Toulon were ringing with the music of thousands of workmen, and the most energetic



But to induce the king to take an interest in the undertaking was no easy matter.

measures everywhere taken to raise France to the position of a First-class Maritime Power.

But to induce the king to take an interest in the undertaking was no easy matter—kings of France hitherto had looked only to fighting on land; however, Colbert succeeded even in this his most difficult task, and by continually submitting to Louis XIV. high flowing accounts of the gallant deeds of French seamen and the pecuniary value of the captures they had made, he at last persuaded the Grand Monarch to bestow some of his royal patronage on his naval forces. In the year 1666, so successful had Colbert's policy been, that he was able to submit to the king an elaborately illuminated parchment work, bound in red morocco, stamped with the arms of France, and fastened with golden clasps, in which were inscribed the names of the vessels of his Majesty's navy.

Six years later we find no fewer than sixty ships of sixty guns and upwards, and more than forty frigates borne on the rolls of the French Navy. Ten years later the king could dispose of over 200 large ships, and, through the operations of the *Inscription Maritime* (Colbert's lasting legacy), could secure the services of 50,000 hardy sailors.

A few words are necessary on the *Inscription Maritime*. Colbert, recognizing that ships without crews were useless, and seeing the long coast-line of France teeming with its seafaring population, determined to utilize the services of these trained seamen.

"Your life," he said, "is one of peril. Your calling is one which, more than any other, brings you face to face with death, and in no other professions have the families of the bread-winners more frequent need of charitable help than yours. Every year the storms which

sweep our coasts leave your wives desolate and your children fatherless. You shall have the protection of the State, but in return you shall hold your services at the disposal of that State when it has need of you. Your own calling will be little interfered with, for the time when your Sovereign has need of you will be just the time when you will be unable to pursue your own avocations in peace, and in return for these services the State will give you a pension when you are no longer able to work, and at your death it will support your families, and provide employment for your sons."

With this end in view all men and boys employed in navigation, whether in long sea or in coasting voyages, or even as fishermen and boatmen, were enrolled in the *Inscription Maritime*. All had to make a fixed subscription to the *Caisse des Invalides*, a sort of Greenwich Hospital and pensioner fund, and in return for this they received a pension on attaining the age of fifty years, and their wives and families were similarly provided for on the death of the bread-winner of the family. All members of the *Inscription* were bound to serve in king's ships when called upon, were forbidden to serve on ships flying a foreign flag, or in a ship carrying letters of marque without the special permission of the naval commandant at the port of register.

And now we come to the question of *Letters of Marque*. For the better security against the action of pirates and privateers, it had become the custom in those days for merchant-vessels to prolong their stay in distant ports until a considerable number of ships had collected and then to make the homeward voyage in company. In times of war these large convoys offered a tempting bait to an enemy's squadrons, and it became necessary then to provide suitable escorts for these

fleets. Many of the merchant-vessels were powerful ships and well-armed, but they were not often able to withstand the attack even of a single man-of-war; we have indeed instances of Indiamen beating off a French squadron, but these were exceptional.

The pursuit and capture of these rich convoys became the principal object of all minor naval operations, and especially of privately armed ships, which by the written authority of their respective Sovereigns were permitted to transfer themselves into veritable vessels of war, and to act sometimes on their own account against an enemy's commerce, and sometimes in company with the fleet of the State in more extended operations. These Corsairs or privateers were as a rule commanded by officers of the merchant service, in exceptional cases by officers of the Royal Navy, and we will find in the following pages, Corsair captains who, for their services, had been granted commissions by the Grand Monarch, still continuing their authorized irregular warfare in the king's own ships; these ships now being fitted out at the expense of the State, now at the private charge of the king's Ministers, now by speculating merchants and ship-owners.

In fine, Corsairs were ships fitted out by private enterprise to reinforce the fleets of the State, and to undertake duties which the king's ships were not numerous enough to perform. Although Mr. John Bright in the House of Commons once candidly owned he could see no difference between a Corsair and a pirate, I humbly submit that there does exist as broad a distinction between the two as between the murderous rioter and the special constable who apprehends him. The one acts in defiance of the law, the other is specially enrolled to carry out the law. To class as pirates brave old John

Whitbourne and the gallant Devon merchants who, arming their staunch craft, dashed out of Torbay and threw disorder into the heart of the Invincible Armada, is indeed to cast a slur on the honor and patriotism of England's best and bravest sailors.

In an able memorandum drawn up by M. De Valincourt, Secretary to the French Navy, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, for the guidance of the Count of Toulouse, Lord High Admiral of France, the question of Corsairs was very fully discussed, and rules were then formulated by Colbert for the governance of merchants and captains engaged in this style of warfare.

The merchants or other individuals wishing to fit out a ship for this service were compelled first to obtain the sanction of the Ministers, and to deposit a sum as caution-money, amounting sometimes to 5000*l*. Then, a commission being granted to the captain named by the charterer or owner, a crew was shipped consisting of a certain proportion of men borne on the roll of the *Inscription Maritime*. The commission contained the name of the vessel, her tonnage, number of guns and crew, the port she hailed from, the seas she was about to cruise in, and her owner's name and residence.

Any artifice was considered justifiable in order to arrive within range of a strange sail, thus it was common enough to sail under false colors, but immediately after firing the summoning gun—that is the blank shot fired to signal a vessel to heave to—it was obligatory that the Corsair should hoist her own colors before commencing an attack. Later on in these pages it will be seen that Duguay Trouin opened fire on a British man-of-war before showing the white flag of France and that the captain of the *Prince of Orange* applied to the British Admiralty that the usual law of nations might

be set in motion against him, and that he be treated as a pirate.

Four classes of vessels were considered lawful prizes and liable to capture by French privateers in accordance with the terms of De Valincourt's memorandum:—

1. Vessels which refused to justify their flags, whether belonging to a hostile or to a friendly power.

2. Vessels which by their papers proved to belong to a hostile State.

3. Vessels which, carrying no papers, sought to hide their nationality.

4. Neutral vessels carrying an enemy's goods.

The task of carrying the goods of a nation then conducting hostilities with another power thus became a dangerous and unprofitable one. To-day the vessel herself is free from capture, and only contraband of war on neutral ships is liable to confiscation; but Colbert, esteeming commerce to be the secret of wealth, and wealth the sinews of war, struck hard, as Napoleon did after him, at the commerce of hostile nations.

Having captured his prize, the Corsair captain had certain formalities to go through which still further proved him to have been acting in an authorized way. He was not permitted, like the pirates of old, or submarines of more modern days, to sink his prizes, or to permit his men to pillage them, or even to admit them to ransom, though we find many Corsairs evading this rule. He was bound at once to close the hatches and to seal them, to take on board his own craft the captain and officers of the prize, to place a prize crew on board her, and to work her into the port whence he himself sailed. He was enjoined to be most careful in preserving all the papers belonging to the prize, and was held personally responsible that no plunder was permitted.

On reaching port the Corsair captain remitted his prize into the hands of the naval commandant, together with her papers, her officers and crew. Documents were then attested giving full particulars as to her capture, to which the captain of the Corsair as well as of the captured ship subscribed their names. Evidence was taken on all points that the Admiralty Court thought necessary.

These formalities concluded, the vessel was put up for sale, and the proceeds of the sale divided in the following manner:—

1. The amount necessary to cover cost of all proceedings connected with the inquiry into the capture, and to defray expenses attendant on the custody of the prize from the date of her arrival in port, and such like incidental expenses, were first deducted.

2. One-tenth of the total residue was reserved for the Lord High Admiral of France.

3. The balance was now divided into three parts, of which two-thirds went to the owner of the ship and those personally interested in the venture, according to their articles of agreement, and the remaining third to the officers and crew.

That privateering was a profitable undertaking few will deny; that it was of immense service to a state is equally certain. Whilst the mercantile marine of an enemy was being driven off the sea by the legalized action of these rovers, the regular fleets could be employed in more extended operations: in blockading coasts, in bombarding ports, in attacking powerful squadrons, for all of which tasks Corsairs, by reason of the lightness of their armament, were unfitted.

The unparalleled successes of the Corsairs who owed their existence to Colbert's system led to various modi-

fications of that system being introduced on the outbreak of every fresh war with England. It was found that the services of men enrolled in the Inscription Maritime were urgently needed for king's ships, and Corsairs were for a time forbidden to ship any enrolled seamen; on this restriction being removed they were permitted to ship sailors of the Inscription up to one-sixth of their crew.

At another period it was found that privateer captains were in the habit of overloading their vessels with guns and men, and taking no precautions to ensure the lives of their sick and wounded. Upon this the State again stepped in and reminded Corsairs that their successes were dependent mainly on the speed of their ships and on the efficiency of their men. Rules were accordingly laid down limiting the ordnance and crews to be carried by vessels of different tonnages, and insisting that every privateer which carried eighteen hands should also carry a surgeon.

The Intendants or Commissaries of Marine at each port were strictly enjoined to inspect every privateer before leaving port, in order that they might personally satisfy themselves not only that the various regulations were being strictly complied with, but also that the captain was furnished with his own commission and blank commissions to bestow on the commanders of prize crews shipped on any vessel he might capture.

As may readily be imagined, England did not sit quietly down under these persistent efforts to ruin her commerce. Letters of marque were freely granted by the Ministry, and thousands of English privateers were put into commission to retaliate on the French.

It must by no means be supposed that England benefited to any very great extent by the action of her privateers. Some few individuals made immense fortunes, and many earned considerable sums. But it was the English ships of war that were mainly instrumental in destroying the merchantships of France. Thus we read in Sir W. Parker's *Life* that this gallant officer in nine years captured sixty vessels, his share amounting to 35,000*l*.

On the other hand the archives of the French Marine prove that in the single year of 1689, *Four thousand two hundred* English and Dutch craft were captured by French Corsairs; and in the archives of Dunkirk we learn that in the space of forty years of war—viz. from 1656—1658; 1666—1667; 1688—1697; 1702—1713; 1744—1748; 1755—1767, and 1778—1783—*Four thousand three hundred and forty-four* prizes were sold by the Admiralty Courts at Dunkirk for the sum of 6,327,000*l*., and that 34,750 prisoners during that period were detained for various terms in that town! In the single year 1751, Two hundred and fifty-one English prizes were carried into Dunkirk.

The operations of vessels carrying letters of marque were not confined to the Channel and seas near home. They scoured the Indian Ocean and the Spanish main; they had ports of refuge at those naval establishments which the forethought of Richelieu had provided in the West Indies and in Canada, in Bourbon, Mauritius, and Madagascar, off the West Coast of Africa, and on the Banks of Newfoundland. Wherever English merchant fleets were used to congregate, there, too, would be found the dashing Corsair.

In the latter half of the seventeenth century Colbert

recognized that England could not support a navy large enough to fight the fleets of other great powers and at the same time protect her own immense merchant navy. England recognized this fact later on, and in turn issued letters of marque, but her Corsairs were powerless to check the depredations committed by those of her neighbours, and it was not until she had destroyed the petty arsenals which by Richelieu's forethought dominated every trade route in the world that she was enabled to drive the French Corsair off distant seas.

Until the colonies of France had passed into England's possession the privateers of Brittany and of Normandy played havoc with her commerce both in the Far East and Far West, and after England had torn from them their harbors of refuge in far-off lands, they still carried on their daring excursions within sight of British coasts, and I believe it to be an undoubted fact that for every vessel England captured from the French, five English craft at least found their way into French ports.

Of the gallant manner in which these Corsairs fought there can be no two opinions; we may prove to our own satisfaction (though we shall never shake the belief of the Frenchman in the tale) that the episode of the *Vengeur* is absolutely without foundation; but we cannot explain away, nor should we attempt to do so, the heroism displayed by the Corsairs of France in many a stubborn fight when, heavily overmatched, they fought under the absolute certainty of defeat.

Duguay Trouin, in the *Diligente*, boldly awaiting the attack of Sir David Mitchell's squadron, is an instance in point—one instance in many—so many that I fear in the following pages I have omitted some of the most

gallant actions of these gallant men, simply because France has not enshrined their names in her naval literature; and England in the bald accounts that still survive of such engagements, has contented herself with retaining the bare facts of historians who have laid but little stress on the bravery shown by the French.

What, for instance, can have been more magnificent than the manner in which the privateer *Guêpe* sustained a running fight with the *Renown*, 74; *Courageux*, 74; *Defence*, 74; *Fishguard*, 50; and *Unicorn*, 30; and when, at last becalmed, she lay helplessly open to the boats of the squadron, she kept these, too, at bay until night fell, and her fire becoming less effective enabled the British to carry her by boarding? Even then she continued her desperate defence, and when at last the British Ensign flew over the Tricolour no man remained upon her decks able to strike her flag. Her captain and twenty-five of the crew were dead, and forty-seven, the sole survivors, lay sorely wounded.

The action of the *Furieuse* in the North Atlantic in July, 1809, is scarcely less heroic. After a heavy engagement with the *Intrepid*, 74, in which she was badly crippled, she fought a second fight with the *Bonne Citoyenne*, 20, a French prize converted into an English man-of-war. In this action the English ship fired 130 broadsides, and at last compelled the sinking *Furieuse* to strike her flag. On taking possession it was found that the privateer had been hulled fourteen times twixt wind and water, that she had five feet of water in her hold, that her captain and thirty-five of her crew were killed, that all her officers and forty-seven men lay dangerously hurt, and that but eight unwounded men stood upon her decks!

Thurot's gallant fight in the *Belle-Isle* against the *Eolus*, *Pallas*, and *Brilliant* is another instance worthy of record. No need here to multiply such cases. Those who read the following pages will find many such recounted.

CHAPTER II

Jean Bart of Dunkirk—1650-1702



JEAN BART, the son of a well-known Corsair, Cornil Bart, was born in Dunkirk on the 21st October, 1650. On his mother's side he had a strain of still other Corsair blood; her father, Michel Jacobsen, nicknamed *Le Renard de la Mer*, was, until his grandson rose to fame, the most renowned of all the Corsairs of the port.

With true Corsair blood running in his veins, and brought up amidst the sulphurous smoke of a beleaguered city, small wonder that young Jean Bart in his early days developed a decided taste for his future calling, and acquired that contempt for danger which was his most striking characteristic. He was but eight years old when the allied French and English armies besieged Dunkirk, and often during the heavy bombardment to which the town was then subjected the lad ran risks inferior to none he courted in after years.

It was in the course of this siege that his father, Cornil Bart, received a wound which incapacitated him from an active career, and the old Corsair, crippled and confined to his room, would inflame the boy's ardour with tales of his past history, tales made more realistic by reason of the warlike accompaniment of the enemy's guns. Open-mouthed the lad would listen to feats of arms in which his father had borne no ignoble part; but the salient figures of each picture

would be the Renard of the Sea, Michel Jacobsen. The death of this old hero was typical of the savage warfare of those days: his *chasse-marée* had been crippled by a Dutch squadron, and after a desperate struggle had been carried by boarding. Rather than fall into the hands of the enemy he fired his magazine with his own hands and perished proudly in the midst of his captors.

But two men survived this gallant episode, and one of these was Luc Bart, grandfather of the little Jean. Thus doubly interested in this oft-repeated tale, for Michel Jacobsen was his grandfather on his mother's side, the future Corsair's youthful dreams were of deeds in which his ancestors had played so brave a part, and his highest aspirations were that he might prove worthy of them.

His mother strove her utmost to turn her boy from these ambitions, but in vain; the stirring tales of the father, and the fond encouragement of a trusted mess-mate who spent his days in the Rue de l'Eglise, quickly bore their fruit, and in his twelfth year Jean Bart embarked as boy on board a Dunkirk smuggler commanded by a well-known Corsair, Jerome Valbué. A man of brutal passions, albeit brave in action and a thorough sailor, was this Valbué, and, despite his friendship for Cornil Bart, young Jean would have fared badly had not Antoine Sauret, his father's old boat-swain, shipped with him and not only shielded him from the skipper's rage, but initiated him into all the mysteries of a sailor's life.

Under Sauret's able guidance Jean Bart soon learnt to knot and splice, to reef and steer, to point a rope, and to train a gun, so that, ere his four years' apprenticeship was over, he was counted the smartest lad in all Dunkirk, and had won at the hands of the Intendant

the prize offered by Colbert for the best marksman at the annual artillery competition on the Dunes.

From boy, Jean Bart soon passed to man, and, though but a lad in years, was in 1666 named mate on board a smart brigantine, the *Cochon Gras*, which Valbué was appointed to command on the outbreak of war with England. But the brutal tyranny of his first captain culminated in an act which drove Jean Bart and his faithful follower Sauret to seek their fortunes in another craft, and so afforded a chance which permitted him to see naval warfare in its grandest aspects. The incident may well be related, typical as it is of the religious intolerance of the day, of the absolute despotism enjoyed by the masters of vessels carrying letters of marque, and of the want of any clearly defined code of maritime laws, either on board king's ships or those belonging to the French mercantile marine.

In this very year, 1666, Colbert, in submitting to Louis XIV. the list of ships of war ready to be used against England, took the opportunity of pointing out to the Grand Monarch the necessity for drawing up a code of laws which should put an end to existing abuses. There was at this time a perpetual conflict between the captains of ships-of-war lying in harbour and the Admiralty officials commanding on shore. At sea the captain was an absolute autocrat, the judge of all matters, arbiter of life and death, and dispenser of an irregular code which was revolting in the cruelty of its edicts, and which, dating from the days of Richard Cœur de Lion, embraced a series of antiquated laws then known under the title of the Judgments of Oléron.

The old Mosaic doctrine, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, was the basis of this code; thus, if a man

drew his knife on another, he was pinned to the mast by a knife through the offending hand; if he wounded a messmate in the arm, his own arm paid the forfeit; if he committed murder, he was tied to the corpse of the murdered man and cast into the sea.

There was a charming simplicity about the Judgments of Oléron which rendered the study of naval law easy enough, and enabled the masters of ships to maintain discipline amongst the most refractory crew, and in days when master and seamen in many crafts lived on terms of the most perfect equality, and eat and drank and played together, perhaps summary justice was necessary.

On board the *Cochon Gras* there sailed a Huguenot seaman, Martin Lanoix by name. Although a brave man, and second to no man on board in sailorlike qualities, his religion drew down upon him the scoffings of his messmates and the most brutal pleasantries of his captain. Of all the crew Jean Bart and Sauret were the only members who showed the Huguenot sympathy, or who treated him as a messmate. One afternoon Valbué, more than half-seas over, had been recounting to his open-mouthed crew the miraculous aid offered to a sinking Breton fisher-boat by a bishop who appeared walking on the water, and quietly stepping over the side infused fresh life and vigour into the worn-out crew, and who with more than superhuman power remained at the pumps until the craft was safe in harbour. Having finished his tale, Valbué took the opportunity to level some injurious epithets at his Huguenot seaman, finishing up his abuse by hurling a half-empty tin drinking-can at Lanoix's head.

The Huguenot, with provoking calmness, wiped the dripping cider from his face and beard, and replied,

"Master, the Judgments of Oléron lay down that the captain should be moderate in his language and just in his dealings to his crew—if you please?"

Exasperated at the tone of Lanoix's reply, Valbué advanced upon him with uplifted hand and threatening words. The Huguenot, falling back, in the same provoking tone continued, "The Judgments of Oléron, which bind you as well as me, lay down that the captain is not to punish the sailor until his anger has cooled down."

"What!" shouted the enraged Valbué, "you, who blaspheme the Blessed Virgin, dare to quote the law to me? Take that!" And lifting high a capstan bar which lay on the open hatch, he aimed a blow at Lanoix's head, which, grazing the face, fell full on the sailor's shoulder.

Sauret, the eldest member of the crew, rose and wished to interpose, but Valbué, turning on him, threatened to strike him also, and the old salt, knowing the absolute authority of the captain, wisely held his peace.

"Captain," said Lanoix, "I have now received your first blow as the law enjoins, but now," lightly jumping over the iron rail which ran across the fore part of the ship, and which marked the quarters of the crew, "now, if you strike me you exceed your rights, and I can resume mine, for I have passed the chain."

"*Comment*," shrieked Valbué, beside himself with rage, "you Huguenot, overweighted with the load of never-to-be-forgiven sins, you whose blasphemies have placed you for ever beyond the law, you dare to talk to me of laws? Dog of a heretic, wait, just wait a moment, and I will show you what laws are applicable to swine, and to Huguenots."

Then seeing Lanoix still stood on his guard behind the chain, Valbué sprang forward and struck him two violent blows in the face. In an instant the knife of the Huguenot flashed in the air and descended on the captain's right arm. The gleam of steel was seen by the crew, and though disgusted at their captain's brutalities, the sense of discipline was strong within them, and rushing forward to Valbué's aid, Lanoix was borne down and pinioned in a trice, but not before turning on the first man who approached him (the coward Valbué stood hounding on his crew), he had stabbed him to the heart.

Pale and trembling with fright and anger, Valbué turned to a cabin-boy, saying, "Go into my cabin; there in a box on the locker you will see a book bound in white parchment; bring it to me."

The boy disappeared, returning again in a few moments with the book, whose fatal decrees all knew so well. Jean Bart, who had been at the tiller whilst this scene was being enacted, stood motionless; quickly his eye would be thrown on the compass to see that the craft still held her course, and then with grim determination cast on the group at the break of the fore-castle. A glance of intelligence passed between him and Sauret, who, walking aft, sat on the weather-rail by Jean Bart's side.

The significance of the movement was not lost on Valbué, who, turning round, shouted in tones of ill-suppressed anger, "You know how to read, Sauret, read this," at the same time holding towards the scarred and weather-beaten salt the little-used volume.

"I will not read it," replied Sauret.

"Then I will do so myself," said Valbué.

"Valbué," interrupted Sauret, "you are not acting

according to the law; that unfortunate," pointing to Lanoix, who, bruised and bleeding, lay bound upon the deck, "should be allowed three meals at which he may acknowledge his fault; nay more, he should be permitted the oaths on bread, and on wine, and on salt, that he may swear to respect your authority in the future."

"Silence," thundered Valbué, "his blasphemies have deprived him of all right of purging his offence—the chain of refuge, the oaths of excuse, the meals of repentance are not for dogs like him. It is not I who judge him, it is the law; I am merely the accuser, listen; I, Maître Valbué, swear by the Holy Apostles that what I read is the law: *'The sailor who strikes or raises his hand against his captain will be fastened to the mast by means of a sharp knife, and compelled to withdraw his hand in such a manner that one-half at least of the erring hand shall remain affixed to the mast.'*" Then half-closing the book, Valbué said, "According to the judgment of Oléron, any sailor blaspheming the Pope shall have his tongue pierced by a hot iron. Lanoix had so blasphemed our Holy Father, and it was my intention to have carried out the letter of the law for the offence, and in attempting to arrest him he drew his knife upon me, me his captain, and wounded me in the arm. Now each man answer in his turn, did Martin Lanoix blaspheme the name of his Holiness, and furthermore did he strike his captain?"

Then rolling up the sleeve of his coat, Valbué holding up his arm displayed a flesh wound, fresh and bleeding, in his right fore-arm. "Answer," shouted Valbué, "Yes or no."

The crew grouped round the captain murmured, "*Oui*," but from the stern of the ship, in old Sauret's

well-known voice, came the words, "Captain, you had passed the chain, and—"

Stamping his foot on the deck, Valbué cried, "That is no answer to my question, son of a dog. Did Martin Lanoix inflict this wound on me or not?"

"But—" interposed Sauret.

"Was it Martin Lanoix, yes or no," shrieked Valbué.

"Very well—No," responded Sauret.

"No," chimed in Jean Bart.

Valbué, trembling with rage, said "Six of the crew affirm that Martin Lanoix did wound his captain, two of the crew say he did not, the majority are right. Boy, fetch my cutlass."

And the boy diving below reappeared with a long, straight Spanish sword, the edge as keen as the finest razor.

Stooping forward, Valbué lashed it to the windlass, edge uppermost, and then directing the crew to raise Lanoix, he lashed the prisoner's arm to the trenchant blade.

"Martin Lanoix, withdraw your arm as the law directs!"

The Huguenot hesitated; then the brutal Valbué, seizing the helpless prisoner by the throat, dashed him backwards, and as he fell, the sword, severing flesh and muscle, laid the quivering arm bare from wrist to elbow.

"Unlash the prisoner," continued Valbué; and, faint with loss of blood, Lanoix sank bleeding on the deck.

"Bring aft the body of Simon Larret," said the captain, moving to the stern of the vessel, where Sauret and Jean Bart remained mute spectators of the direful scene. Two men carrying aft the corpse laid it at the feet of the still senseless Lanoix.

"I swear by the Holy Apostles, that what I read is true," continued Valbué, once more opening the book.

"If any sailor kills a messmate or so wounds him that he dies from the effects of that wound, the living man shall be lashed to the dead, and both shall be cast into the sea; if the murder takes place ashore, the murderer shall be executed as the law provides."

"Yes or no, did Martin Lanoix kill Simon Larret?" interrogated Valbué.

"Yes," answered the six as before.

"No," replied Sauret and Jean Bart.

"Six recognize the murder, two refuse to do so, the majority are in the right. Carry out the law."

And Martin Lanoix, victim to the ungovernable hatred of a brutal captain, was lashed to the yet warm corpse and cast into the sea.

That evening the *Cochon Gras* entered Calais, and Sauret with his young master bade farewell for ever to the brutal skipper, whose inhuman conduct, however, brought forth good fruit. In accordance with the law Valbué reported the occurrence to the Intendant at Calais, and this official, the *Sieur de Imfreville*, penned an able memorandum on the inequalities of naval laws. This memorandum was submitted by Colbert to Louis XIV., with a scheme for the codification of the existing laws, and so, from the murder of the poor Huguenot, sprang the famous Code Maritime of France.

The part played by Jean Bart and Sauret in the Lanoix episode met with the high approval of the Intendant, and when a few days later some French cavaliers reached Calais anxious to join Ruyter's fleet then blockading the English in the Thames, Imfreville sent for young Bart, and asked him if he would under-

take to convey the noblemen to the Dutch admiral. Bart accepted the task with pleasure.

That night, as the sun went down, he quitted Calais harbour in a well-found half-decked boat; himself, the faithful Sauret, and two Calais men as crew; whilst cowering in the stern-sheets were the Marquis d'Har-court, and the Counts de Coislen and de Cavoye, brave men all, but little used to midnight cruises in open boats in the Northern seas.

Ruyter was lying off Harwich with a fleet of seventy-five vessels-of-war and eleven fire-ships. Monk lay moored off Queensborough with some eighty ships of various sorts. Already, in the month of June, a general action indecisive in its results had been fought between the two fleets, and it was known that Monk only waited a favourable breeze to come out of the Thames and try his fate once more. The French courtiers were anxious to witness the coming battle. Imfreville impressed on Jean Bart the necessity of carrying on all sail, and reaching the Dutch fleet as soon as possible.

The young Corsair was no less keen to participate in the fight; he saw before him a chance that fell to the lot of but few Frenchmen, and he needed no second bidding to use his utmost endeavor to put his passengers on the Dutch flag-ship. An admiral was to the lad a thing apart—half angel, half God; for landsmen he had the most profound contempt, even the Intendant with powdered wig and silken hose awakened in him merely a feeling of pity; the French cavaliers, now helpless and sick, with all their brave finery, their lace ruffles and jewelled swords, their broad ribbons and sparkling honors, were but landsmen after all, objects of contempt and commiseration; but an admiral, a live admiral, who had under him scores of huge ships with

frowning ports and polished cannon, such a man was to be dreaded, envied, nay, died for.

Jean Bart was no fool; he had kept his eyes open throughout the five years he had now been to sea, and he could judge what information the Dutch admiral would be likely to ask for, when his little craft ranged alongside the flag-ship. Could he but earn a word of praise from the hero, he felt he should die happy. Quickly did he revolve his plan in his own mind, and after whispered consultation with Sauret, he determined on bearing up for Queensborough and seeing what the English fleet was doing; his little craft, if discovered and pursued, could get into shoal water where no ship-of-war dare follow.

The scheme succeeded to the utmost. Flying up the Thames on a flood-tide with a breeze from the south-east, Jean Bart found himself by midday within easy view of Monk's fleet, and having leisurely counted their number, he put his boat about, and on a falling tide bore off past Southend, round the Essex coast, and at 8 a.m. the following morning ran up to Ruyter's fleet. There was no mistaking the admiral's ship, her lofty poop surmounted by its huge bronze lanterns, her gilded carvings, and her powerful armament, irrespective of the admiral's flag flying bravely from the main top-gallant masthead, marked her out at once, and as he ran up under her lee Jean Bart woke the worn-out cavaliers, and told them that their voyage was over.

Cramped from their long confinement and soaked with the salt water which had been shipped in bucket-fuls by the little craft, the three French nobles rose disconsolately from their hard couch, and with difficulty climbed the accommodation-ladder of the *Sept Provinces*, Ruyter's vessel. When once on board, however,

feeling something stable under their feet, they recovered their *sang-froid* and asked the officer of the watch to be allowed to present their credentials to the Dutch admiral. Jean Bart, too, with easy nonchalance requested an interview to hand over the three passengers entrusted him by the Governor of Calais.

In the admiral's presence all Jean Bart's assurance forsook him, and falling at Ruyter's feet he could only stammer forth protestations of admiration, and pray that he might be permitted to serve on board the flagship. On hearing of Jean Bart's spirited cruise up the Thames, and the disposition of Monk's fleet, Ruyter willingly consented to shipping Jean Bart (who produced his certificate of gunnery received from the Intendant at Dunkirk as an evidence of his efficiency) on board the *Sept Provinces* as an able seaman, and at Jean Bart's entreaties Sauret received a similar rating, and so it came about that the future Corsair of Dunkirk, whose proudest achievements were his victories over the Dutch, first smelt powder in the great naval battle between Ruyter and Monk.

In the hard-fought action of the 6th of August the young French volunteer greatly distinguished himself, not merely at his station on the 'tween decks, but when the fight was nearly over, he in company with the Marquis of Harcourt and his two companions, the Counts de Coislen and de Cavoye, aided in attacking and driving off a fire-ship that had drifted on to the *Sept Provinces*. In June, the following year, he formed one of that gallant force which, sailing up the Thames, bombarded Sheerness, and then proceeding up the Medway, sunk the British ships below Rochester Bridge, and taught proud England that her capital was within a measureable distance of destruction. For five

years Jean Bart served in the Dutch navy, learning much he would never have acquired in the service of his own country, and thoroughly mastering the educational portion of a sailor's profession.

With this period of his life we have little to do, as the Corsair of Dunkirk, Jean Bart, had no existence on a Dutch line-of-battle ship, and we may pass over the history of these five years without remark. But, though serving under the Dutch tricolour, his heart was with the spotless flag of France, and when in April, 1672, the Grand Monarch declared war against the States-General, Jean Bart, declining the most tempting offers of employment, left the Hague and found his way to Dunkirk. His name was by no means forgotten in that port, and Jean Bart speedily found subordinate employment on one of the many Corsairs sailing from his native town.

Step by step he worked his way aft, and in less than eighteen months was, early in 1674, placed in command of his first craft, a *chasse-marée*, mounting two guns with a crew of thirty-six men: a humble beginning truly, for one who was in after years to command a squadron of king's ships, and to be enshrined for ever in the hearts of his countrymen as one of France's truest seamen.

The *King David*, Bart's first ship, proved a mighty man-of-war. Within a week of leaving port she triumphantly returned towing behind her a Dutch brigantine, the *Homme Sauvage*, laden with coal. Though of little intrinsic value, such an early success was a happy omen for young Bart, who on the 3rd of April of the same year put to sea for a second time, and returned to port on the 6th with a still richer prize in the shape of the Dutch brig *Friendly Adventure*, mounting ten

guns, and bound from Vigo to Antwerp with a cargo of wine.

Yet still the tide of success flowed full and free; on the 11th of May a third prize, the *Saint Paul of Bruges*, with 184 hogsheads of Bordeaux and a like number of Burgundy, hailing from Bayonne, fell into his hands; and on the 15th of the same month a Dutch smack, with a miscellaneous cargo of shellfish, hazel-nuts, and 500 pairs of knitted stockings, hauled down her flag without attempting to escape. In the month of June two more prizes fell to his lot, and now Jean Bart's name was bandied from tongue to tongue as worthy son of gallant sire, and the merchants of Dunkirk spoke openly of him as one likely to walk in the steps of the grand old Renard of the Sea.

It is true that the six prizes he had already taken had hauled down their flags without making any resistance, and that young Bart had as yet found no opportunity of showing his stuff in a hand-to-hand fight; but tough old Antoine Sauret still prowled the streets of Dunkirk, and he had not allowed Jean Bart's conduct when serving under Ruyter to be under-estimated by his fellow-townsmen. If Sauret in his cups spoke true, it was Jean Bart, alone and unaided, who had beaten off Monk's fleet on the 6th of August, and who had sunk and burned the English ships off Chatham dockyard. Allowing for the pardonable exaggeration of a salt who had served the Bart family man and boy for more than half a century, enough was to be learnt from Sauret's tales to prove that Jean Bart was not the man to show his heels to any Dutchman in the Channel.

It was then determined to give him a more important command, and in August of the same year Jean Bart sailed from Dunkirk in a smart brigantine, *La Royale*,

carrying ten guns. The two months spent ashore had evidently not caused the young captain's star to pale, for on the 27th of the same month he captured a Dutchman, laden with planks and cordage, named the *Elizabeth*; and on the 11th of the following month, after a sharp encounter, he carried by boarding a Greenland whaler mounting eight guns.

Cruising now in company with two other seamen of Dunkirk, William Doorn and Charles Keyser, Bart once more entered on an unchecked career of prosperity: on the 8th October he captured the *Baleine-gris*, and on the 24th of the same month the *St. George*, both bound from Norway with timber. So in his first year of independent command he had captured, either alone and unaided or in company with his friends Doorn and Keyser, ten prizes, some of which were of considerable value.

The year 1675 opened equally auspiciously. On the 13th, 17th and 21st of January respectively he captured the *Ville de Paris*, laden with wheat; the *Premier Jugement du Solomon*, with sulphur; and the *Esperance*, twelve guns, flying the flag of the States-General, and actually in charge of a convoy of three merchantmen, hailing from Norway with wood for the Dutch Navy. The merchantmen escaped, but the *Esperance* gallantly kept the Corsairs at bay until they had reached the safety of the land, when, having lost her captain, first lieutenant, and ten of her crew, she struck her colors. Such a prize at once put Jean Bart into the very front rank of Dunkirk Corsairs, and pointed him out as one worthy to be entrusted with the command of king's ships, which it was rumored Colbert, finding the want of duly qualified men in the navy, intended to

hand over to the care of the most renowned Corsair captains in the northern ports.

The capture of the *Esperance* enabled Jean Bart to do what his father and grandfather had done before him, namely, to marry young. His bride, a mere girl of sixteen, captivated by the renown which even now attached itself to the name of the brave Corsair, and little recking the life of anxiety and misery before her, responded ardently to the love which the gallant sailor showered upon her, and so far from checking his aspirations, held it her highest glory to encourage him in the career which had brought much honour and much sorrow to the good old name of Bart.

Four short months did Jean Bart remain with his bride, and then in the month of July, with the *Royale* freshly equipped, he once more put to sea.

On the 30th of the month, after a running fight of some three hours in duration, he compelled to heave to and captured the Dutch ship *Arms of Hamburg*, mounting twelve guns and carrying a valuable cargo of gold dust, elephants' teeth, and sugar. Five days later, in company with his old friend Keyser, he took the Dutch ship *Lévrier*, carrying letters of marque, and mounting twelve guns; and four days after that, the *Bergère*, also of the same armament. These two vessels were employed in the protection of the herring fishermen, and at the same time as they were captured, fifteen fishing-smacks fell into Jean Bart's hands.

Unable to convoy seventeen vessels into harbour, Bart and Keyser agreed to allow the captains of four of the smacks—*Canard Doré*, *Esperance*, *Hemp Cloper*, and *Saint Nicolas*—to ransom their craft for a total sum of 11,600*l*. This act of admitting prizes to ransom was in express defiance of the laws appertaining to

French Corsairs, and in the proceedings, still to be seen in the Archives of Dunkirk, relating to the capture of this convoy Bart and Keyser were warned that no composition with the owners or captains of prizes is permitted; that all such prizes are to be brought into port, there to be dealt with by the Admiralty Court; and that in the event of their so offending again they will be proceeded against by the King's Procureur.

To punish them for this infringement of well-known laws, half the amount received as ransom was bestowed on the Dunkirk hospital. To draw a hard and fast line refusing the captains of privateers permission to treat with the captains of captured vessels was ill-judged, and in this instance had Bart and Keyser endeavoured to work their seventeen prizes into a French harbour, the chances are they would themselves have been made prisoners by their own captives. The crews of the *Grand Louis* and the *Royale* amounted to but 112 men, the total number of hands on the captured craft to over 250; and in ransoming the four largest fishing-smacks, opportunity was taken to release 184 Dutch prisoners, and so to reduce the men on the prizes to a number compatible, not merely with the safe working of the ships themselves, but with the safe custody of the prisoners.

Despite the wordy remonstrances of the Admiralty Board, we shall find Jean Bart on more than one occasion acting according to the best of his judgment and arranging compositions with the captains of his prizes; we shall see him receiving similar warnings from the authorities in Paris, and we shall see the Dunkirk hospital benefiting largely by his conduct.

One more short cruise this year resulted in the capture, on the 24th October, of the *Arbre de Chêne*, a

vessel hailing from Drontheim, with a cargo of copper. Satisfied with having made twenty prizes since the opening of the year, Jean Bart paid off the *Royale*, and occupied himself during the winter months with bringing the influence of his name and his successes to bear on the merchants of Dunkirk, in order to induce them to entrust him with a larger craft than any he had yet commanded.

The only objection to be urged against Jean Bart's repeated applications was his youth. But in all his actions he had shown himself possessed of such sterling qualities, such sound judgment, that his men and officers spoke as highly of his seamanlike qualities as of his gallantry in action. The number of his prizes testified to his success as a Corsair, and it was felt that in confining him to the petty *rôle* he had hitherto filled with honour, the merchants were depriving themselves of those greater profits which Bart in a more powerful ship would most undoubtedly bring them.

It was determined then to place him in command of a smart frigate, the *Palme*, mounting twenty-four guns, with a crew of 150 men. Henceforward a wider sphere was opened out for him, and he felt that he might now hope to rival the deeds of his brave ancestor, the old Renard of the Sea.

On the 25th of March, 1676, the *Palme* sailed from Dunkirk, and as if in happy augury of a successful future, that same night she captured a small Dutch craft mounting ten guns. Standing back to harbour, to place his prize in safety, Bart was received with tumultuous welcome; but he was anxious to try the metal of the *Palme* on craft more worthy of his steel, and with the next tide he was once more leaving the dunes of Dunkirk in his wake. Two days later his

look-outs signalled several sail in the offing, and on coming within speaking distance, Bart, who had fortunately joined company with three other Dunkirk Corsairs, found himself opposed to a powerful squadron of eight armed whalers under convoy of three Corsairs, one of the latter flying the Dutch tricolour, the other two the flag of Burgundy.

A smart action promptly ensued, the enemy's vessels carrying letters of marque, gallantly striving their utmost to ensure the safety of the convoy entrusted to them. For three hours the fight lasted, and then Bart, succeeding in laying his vessel alongside the Dutch Corsair the *Tertoole*, carried her by boarding. She was the most considerable prize he had ever captured, and the fight, a hand-to-hand one, the sharpest he had yet engaged in. Seeing the fate of their consort, the other Corsairs crowded on all sail and escaped. Bart's companions, instead of following them, busied themselves in securing the eight trading-ships which had not succeeded in making good their escape.

With this rich booty the little squadron returned to Dunkirk, where Jean Bart laid the *Palme* up for a few weeks to repair the damage sustained in the action with the *Tertoole*, and to alter her rig and increase the spread of her canvas. It was late in August ere the *Palme* was once more ready for sea; but the delay was undertaken with the object of making the *Palme* worthy of the career which Bart had in his mind's eye carved out for her, and neither captain nor owner grudged either the time or the money.

Hitherto all Bart's successes had been against small craft; the very nature of his own ship prevented him venturing to attack vessels of considerable size, which in those days carried heavy crews and powerful arma-

ments; now however, he was in command of a handy fast-sailing frigate carrying men enough to warrant his indulging in the hope of at last realizing the dreams of his childhood.

On the 1st of September Jean Bart left Dunkirk on his autumn cruise, to return three days later with a large Dutch smack laden with knitted hose from the London markets. Having landed his prize, the *Hope of Bremen*, over to the Intendant of the port, he once more stood out to sea, and on the 7th his look-out reported a fleet of fishing-vessels dead ahead under convoy of a man-of-war. At last the long-wished-for opportunity had arrived.

Crowding on all sail, Jean Bart swept into the midst of the convoy, and throwing out the white flag of France, fired a shot across the enemy's bows as a signal for her to heave to and be searched; for an answer the tricolour of Holland was run up to the Dutch corvette's main-mast-head, and she saluted the *Palme* with a broadside that, whistling through her sails and rigging, warned Bart his adversary carried as heavy a metal and as well-drilled a crew as any he had yet been able to encounter.

The commander of the Dutchman, Liémard Cuiper, was a sailor of renowned skill and courage, and not the man to strike his flag until his ship was past fighting. Bart, too, was equally determined that the *Palme* should conquer or be captured in the fight. For three hours at short range the artillery duel lasted. Bart the whole time manœuvring his vessel so as to lay her alongside the enemy and carry her by boarding, Cuiper endeavoring to avoid this form of encounter.

At last the main-mast of the *Neptune* being badly crippled, the vessel refused to answer her helm, and

Bart skilfully bringing the *Palme* up to her weather-quarter, lashed his own fore-rigging to the after-shrouds of the Dutchman, and at the head of 120 men of Dunkirk dashed aboard the enemy's ship. Cuiper, badly wounded, encouraged his men by voice and gesture; but the long cannonade had damped their ardour. Their decks were already encumbered with the dead and dying; their ship with badly wounded spars could not hope to escape; but little fight was left within them, and within five minutes of Bart leaping on her deck the flag of the States-General was hauled down, and that of France flew from the prize's fore-mast-head.

The following evening Jean Bart rounded the pier-head at Dunkirk, the *Palme*, decked with bunting, leading the way; close in her wake followed the *Neptune*, a fine vessel of thirty-two guns, her main-top mast shot away, but from the shattered stump flew the tricolour of the States-General, surmounted by the white flag of France; astern at no great distance was a little fleet of fishing-smacks, the convoy which at the surrender of the *Neptune* had also fallen into Jean Bart's hands.

The fame of this gallant action spread further than the town of Dunkirk; the Intendant forwarded a report of it to Colbert, and the Minister realizing the importance of encouraging the Corsair fleet of France, forwarded a gold chain to the Intendant with instructions that it was to be bestowed on Jean Bart in recognition of the capture of the *Neptune*.

It was just at this period that Colbert was devoting his best energies towards the development of the French Navy, which may be said to have had no separate existence until the advent to power of this minister. Imbued with the idea, as he expressed himself in a memorandum drawn up for the instruction of his son

Seignelay, *Commerce is the source of wealth, and wealth is the nerve of war*, Colbert's best efforts were turned towards the means for encompassing the destruction of the fleets of England and of Holland. "It is necessary," he said, "that the King of France should be absolute master of the Channel as well as of the Mediterranean."

With this end in view he established schools of gunnery at all the seaports, granting prizes to the fishermen who were the most successful marksmen; he drew up the scheme for the *Inscription Maritime*, by which the State secured the services in time of war of the whole seafaring population; he promised pecuniary rewards to the most successful Corsair captains, and placed at their disposal vessels of war that were not required for immediate commission. He did more; he actually placed them in command of his Majesty's ships; and, disgusted with the lack of zeal shown by the aristocrats who alone had been permitted up to this time to hold commissions in the navy, he after a long struggle succeeded in inducing the Grand Monarch to bestow commissions on the most deserving of these Corsairs.

Colbert, struck with the successes obtained by the Corsair captains, propounded a scheme by which the most renowned in each port should be nominated as it were commodore of the flotillas sailing from that port; that he should direct the operations of the various little ships and control their movements, in the hope that by thus acting in consort they might be enabled to attack the enemy's larger ships of war, which as yet remained unthreatened. With this end in view memoranda were addressed to the Intendants at the various ports, call-

ing for a return of the vessels engaged in this calling, with the names and qualifications of their captains.

To this memorandum the Intendant of Dunkirk returned a reply, dated the 26th of September, 1676, giving his views on the capabilities of three-and-thirty captains hailing from Dunkirk; at the head of this list stood the name of Jean Bart.

Whilst Colbert was evolving projects for the employment of these Corsairs, Jean Bart was gaining fresh honors. On the 11th of September, within four days of the gallant capture of the *Neptune*, he overtook and compelled to surrender a Dutch brigantine, the *Golden Hawk*, and on the 15th the *Corbeau Vert*, a fine vessel laden with Spanish wine, also fell into his hands. On the 21st a third prize, the *Pelican*, and on the 22nd two more also hauled down their flags to him.

These three last were vessels of considerable value; the *Pelican*, bound from Batavia with indigo, spices, and precious woods; the *Lady Christine* and the *Prophet Daniel*, from Archangel with skins and furs. His own ship's company was so reduced by the prize crews placed on board these vessels, that Jean Bart was compelled somewhat reluctantly to interrupt his victorious career. On reaching Dunkirk, however, he was persuaded, as the winter was approaching, and navigation in the Northern Ocean was dangerous, to lay up the *Palme* until the worst of the season should be past.

In less than three months Bart, tired of a shore-going life, was once more at sea, and once more continuing his career of success. On the 16th of January, 1677, a Greenland whaler, the *Cabillaud*, surrendered and was admitted to ransom (despite the express prohibition of the king), for 2,800*l*. In the course of the

following month, three other vessels were captured and also set free on payment of bonds aggregating 6,500*l*.

The simplicity of this procedure had a charm for Bart. His cruise was not interrupted by the necessity of escorting the prize into harbour. He realized as much from the captain of the vessel as he would by a forced sale in Dunkirk, and moreover the money was distributable at once, instead of being retained for months in the hands of the Intendant pending the settlement of the many claims which always sprang up to delay the proceedings in the Admiralty Courts.

In the same month of February, 1677, three more Dutchmen were taken: the *Prince William*, which hauled down her flag at the first shot; the *Good Fortune*, which after a running fight of three hours' duration was dismasted and carried by boarding, losing her captain and six of her crew in her vain attempt to escape; and the *Elephant*, a brigantine from Oporto, laden with wine. After escorting these vessels into Dunkirk, Bart was detained some weeks in port, in order to settle up his accounts with the Admiralty, and to be once more warned of his inability to admit prizes to ransom. Still the captain stood too high in his profession for M. Hubert to venture to do more than point out the advisability of conforming more strictly to the Admiralty regulations; and the sums realized by Bart in his pecuniary transactions with the captains of his prizes realized a handsome addition to the king's Exchequer, which at this period was sadly straitened.

On the 1st of May, Jean Bart was once more at sea, and on the 7th of the same month overhauled and boarded a fine three-masted ship, the *Golden Prince*, bound from the Azores with fruit. On convoying his

prize to Dunkirk, he found that the merchants who had hitherto employed him were prepared to entrust him with a new and finer ship than the *Palme*, one that had been specially built with a view for speed, and was now to be rigged and equipped under her new captain's eye.

The *Dauphin*, Bart's new craft, mounted thirty guns, and carried a crew of 200 men. Anxious to test her capabilities before winter put an end to the free navigation of the Northern Sea, Jean Bart took his new command out for a cruise in the month of September, and succeeded in bringing into port a brigantine bound from Harwich to Rotterdam with coal and oysters. Several weeks now passed without his seeing a single vessel, and as it was evident that the early break of winter had induced Dutch owners to lay up their craft, Jean Bart stood in to Dunkirk and paid the *Dauphin* off.

Late in December news reached Dunkirk that the herring fishery was being prosecuted by the Dutch with considerable vigour, and that owing to the absence of French Corsairs, no man-of-war was escorting the fishing fleet. Hastily collecting a crew and getting the *Dauphin* ready for sea, Jean Bart cleared from the port on the 30th of December, and on the first day of the new year ran into the fleet on the Doggerbank. The surprise was complete, five vessels were captured before they could escape from the much-dreaded Corsair, and hoping to make more prizes on the morrow, Bart admitted them to ransom for the round sum of 10,600*l.*, and then stood on and off with the idea of cruising off the Bank until the fishing-vessels should return; but the appearance of the *Dauphin* had driven the Dutchmen into harbour, and Bart, seeing no prospect of further

prizes, bore up for Dunkirk, paid off his ship, and remained ashore until the month of June.

Towards the middle of this month he once more left port, this time in company with two small Corsairs, the *Emperor*, Captain Keyser, and the *Lady of Lombardy*, Captain Soutenage. Cruising off the mouth of the Meuse, a Dutch frigate was sighted early on the morning of the 18th of June; the *Lady of Lombardy*, the smallest vessel of the squadron, happened to be nearest the enemy, who, judging her an easy prey, bore down on her, hoping to carry her by boarding before the arrival of her consorts.

Soutenage seeing his danger, manœuvred so as to prevent her coming alongside, and succeeded in maintaining the unequal conflict until the *Dauphin*, arriving within range, opened a heavy fire upon the Dutchman; and now it was the turn of the *Sherdam* to dread the boarders of Dunkirk; but, less happy than the *Lady of Lombardy*, the Dutch captain found himself unable to keep clear of the French ships. Tacking in response to signal, the *Lady of Lombardy* bore down on the man-of-war, and she in striving to avoid the shock ran under the lee of the *Dauphin*.

Jean Bart quickly had his grappling-irons fixed in the Dutchman's fore-rigging, and, sword in hand, he himself led on the boarders, whilst Soutenage, coming up on the other quarter, poured a strong reinforcement on the *Sherdam's* decks. The Dutch, however, were not to be overcome so easily as Jean Bart hoped. Ranc, the captain of the *Sherdam*, was of different metal to those of his nationality who were wont to haul down their flags at the first shot of a French Corsair, and he animated his brave crew by his own bravery.

It was not until he had been badly wounded himself,

and fifty-seven out of the ninety-four men of his crew lay low on her decks, that the brave Ranc hauled down his flag; the fight had lasted an hour and a half, and had been by far the sharpest in which Bart had yet been engaged; he had received a bullet-wound through the calf of his leg, and was badly burnt on the face and hands by the discharge of a cannon as he leaped on board the enemy.

As for the *Dauphin*, her cruising days were over; she had been so grievously hulled by the heavy guns of the Dutch man-of-war that it was with the utmost difficulty Bart succeeded in bringing her safe into port. The casualties on the *Dauphin* amounted to six killed and thirty-one wounded.

In less than a fortnight, Jean Bart, scarcely recovered from his wounds, was once more at sea, this time in command of a fine vessel, the *Mars*, carrying thirty-two guns. Already peace negotiations had been opened between France and the States-General, and it behoved Bart to act with vigour if he desired to add to his fortune before the close of the war. Good-luck once more favoured him; on the 7th of July a fine brig, the *Saint Martin*, bound from Spain to Amsterdam with wine, and on the 18th of the same month the *Saint Antoine*, with general merchandise, fell into his hands. On the 10th of August the Peace of Nimeguen was signed, and Jean Bart, in obedience to instructions received from the Intendant at Dunkirk, paid off his ship and prepared to rest on his laurels.

Colbert had kept his eye upon this brave Corsair of Dunkirk, and had determined, as soon as he could overcome the strong opposition at Court, to enlist Bart into the king's service. His gallant capture of the *Sherdam* enabled him to lay his projects before the king and to

push them with more vigour; he was able to explain to the Grand Monarch that by depriving the State of the service of such men as Jean Bart, he was depriving the Exchequer of revenues which now flowed into the pockets of private individuals. Had Jean Bart been in the employ of the king, one-half of the value of his many prizes would have been secured to the State, instead of a beggarly one-tenth.

Still, it was months before the king would listen to Colbert's pleading, and it was not until the 8th of January, 1679, that Jean Bart received his commission as lieutenant in the French Navy.

In the future his career is bound up with that of an officer of the regular service; his days as a Corsair are numbered; and though many acts of bravery have still to be recorded—many gallant feats of arms more notable than any he had the opportunity of performing when a mere Corsair—yet they are of interest only as the acts of one whose name is inseparably connected with the history of the Corsairs of France. Jean Bart lives in the memory of his countrymen, not as a distinguished officer of the navy—his career as such is forgotten—but as one of the best known and certainly one of the most popular of French privateers.

It was practically impossible that in a time of peace any opportunity would be afforded Jean Bart for the display of those seamanlike qualities which had attracted Colbert's attention; indeed, the *rôle* of a simple lieutenant in a ship of war was little pleasing to him.

It brought him, a rough-and-ready sailor, possessed of little or no education, into daily contact with the wealthy curled darlings of the nation who alone filled the commissioned ranks of the navy—men with whom he had nothing in common, and who resented the ap-

pearance of the Dunkirk Corsair on the quarter-deck of a ship of war. Still, the discipline was of use to our hero; it accustomed him to phases of life hitherto unknown, and taught him at the same time that mere personal valour was not the only necessary qualification for a sailor.

Having served two years in a subordinate position, Jean Bart, still a lieutenant, was in 1681 entrusted with the command of a small expedition for the purpose of chastizing the Barbary pirates, who were interfering seriously with commerce in the Mediterranean and also on the coast of Guinea. The service was one specially suited to a man of Jean Bart's temperament and experience, and Colbert showed as much wisdom in the selection of a commander as Jean Bart did in the execution of the task confided to him.

The nomination of the ex-Corsair caused some heart-burning in naval circles, and Colbert, himself of humble origin, was accused of purposely slighting the many able nobles in the service who were of superior rank to the young lieutenant, and who, without any show of favouritism, might have been selected for the task.

In the month of June, Jean Bart sailed from Dunkirk with two small vessels, the *Vipère*, fourteen, and *Harlequin*, twelve; on the 30th of the same month he fell in with two large feluccas cruising under the coast, within sight of Cape Saint Vincent, whilst dead ahead sailed a large English fleet.

Hoisting French colors, Jean Bart fired a blank shot to signal the feluccas to heave to, but they, knowing the heavy reckoning France owed them, separated, and crowding on all sail, endeavored to escape. One, bearing up for the shore, ran for shallow water, the other stood boldly on for the English fleet, feeling secure that the

French man-of-war would not venture to attack her when under the protection of the British guns. Jean Bart at once ordered the *Harlequin* to give chase to this latter craft whilst he pursued the larger one; after a chase of some hours he drove the felucca ashore; then sending his own boats to complete the work of destruction, he, after having removed her guns, valuables, and stores, set her on fire.

The crew of the pirate on landing were at once attacked by a detachment of Portuguese troops, and seeing flames arising from their ship, and then feeling that all hope of escape was cut off, incontinently surrendered. The *Harlequin*, on her side, chased the second felucca into the heart of the English squadron; then, in defiance of maritime law, and discourteously neglecting the admiral's signal, she wore ship and stood back to join her consort without saluting the English flag.

Jean Bart now determined to proceed to Lisbon and demand on behalf of the French King the Moorish prisoners who, on the felucca being driven ashore, were recently captured near Cape Saint Vincent. Thanks to the intervention of Baron Oppenheim, French Minister at the Court of Portugal, the demand, though somewhat irregular, was complied with, and Jean Bart, in company with the *Harlequin* and a third French vessel then lying in the Tagus (a Corsair of Dunkirk, commanded by an old friend), shortly left the Tagus, *en route* for the Mediterranean, there to carry on his work of retribution.

Two days after leaving Lisbon he once more sighted the English squadron, the felucca contentedly sailing on in their company.

Jean Bart decided on a plan of action by which he hoped to destroy the little craft which had so outwitted

him. The English were standing on under easy sail, and the three French vessels, smart sailors all of them, soon overhauled them and passed to windward, without dipping colors or lowering topgallant yards. The English admiral indignant at this breach of etiquette, fired a gun to demand the salute, whereupon the three Frenchmen, separating, stood on in different directions; the admiral signalled to give chase, and the felucca, thinking the vessels after whom the English squadron were standing would never venture to attack her, stood on alone to the westward.

Confident in the sailing power of his little squadron, Bart kept on his course for some time, then suddenly changing it he bore up after the felucca, the *Harlequin* and Dunkirk Corsair acting in concert with the *Vipère*.

The Moorish craft, thinking this was but a ruse to shake off the English squadron, and taking the three craft for Portuguese vessels, made no attempts to escape, and it was not until the *Vipère*, running up within range, hauled down the Portuguese and flung out the French colors that she discovered her mistake; then it was too late to make any further attempt to escape, as all three Frenchmen were between her and the English squadron, the commander of which, seeing them fling out French colors, was forced to content himself with merely reporting Jean Bart's conduct to the Admiralty.

Amongst the prisoners found on board this felucca were some Moorish nobles who secured their freedom by paying a very heavy ransom to Jean Bart; this, together with the sum realized by the sale of the Moorish craft, brought in sufficient money to recoup Colbert for the money spent in fitting out the expedition, and moreover it taught the Moors such a salutary lesson that

for a considerable number of years the French flag was unmolested in the waters of the Mediterranean.

Two years after the episode of the Moorish pirates, Jean Bart found himself once more in the Mediterranean, this time in command of a fine frigate the *Serpente*, of thirty-six guns.

France was again at war, and the services of the ex-Corsair were required against Spain.

Though still holding but the rank of lieutenant, we find Jean Bart in 1683 exercising an independent command, and with all his accustomed skill and vigour, and we still see him accompanied by his usual good fortune. In the *Serpente* he made one valuable prize: a large Spanish transport, bound from Cadiz to the Balearic Isles, was sighted, chased, and captured. So far as can be ascertained from contemporary records, the Spaniard showed no fight, though she carried, in addition to her own crew, 350 soldiers destined to increase the garrison of Majorca. Bart's success was once more the signal for hostile attacks on the part of the officers of the king's navy, and Colbert, in deference to the Grand Monarch's wishes, was compelled to relieve the gallant Corsair of his command, and post him as lieutenant to the *Modéré*, another vessel on the Mediterranean station.

During the two years he served on this ship, he saw a great deal of active service, was present at the bombardment of Cadiz, capture of Genoa, and rendered material aid in the attack on two large Spanish line-of-battle ships, which struck their flags after a desperate resistance; in this engagement Bart was severely wounded by a fragment of shell in the thigh. The wound necessitated his being invalided home; but with war-clouds hovering over France, Jean Bart was not

the man to idle away his time in Dunkirk, and long ere his wound was fairly healed, we find him once more petitioning for employment. The Minister of Marine was unable to give him a ship; Court influence was too strong.

Colbert succeeded, however, in inducing Louis XIII. to promote the brave lieutenant to the rank of commander, and in this grade he remained unemployed for two years. At the expiry of this time, France found herself engaged, not merely against Spain, but against nearly every State in Europe. The operations, it is true, were chiefly carried on on land, and the Grand Monarch, to Colbert's chagrin, bestowed never a thought on his navy.

In the following year, 1689, when England threw her balance in the scales, the war naturally assumed a maritime character, and then the value of Colbert's Inscription maritime began to be readily recognized. The lists of Corsair captains were once more rescued from dust-covered pigeon-holes, and efforts made to resuscitate the system that had proved so destructive to Dutch trade in the last naval war.

But in the ensuing war the profits of privateering were not to be wholly absorbed by private firms. Ministers threw themselves heart and soul into such enterprises, and we find Seignelay, Colbert's son, and now acting under his father's instructions as Minister of Marine, directing the Intendant at Dunkirk to fit out his two smartest frigates, the *Railleuse*, twenty-four, and the *Serpente*, sixteen, and to hand them over to Jean Bart for service in the Channel. Seignelay and the Marquis de Louvois, the Minister of War, conjointly sharing the expense of equipment.

Such an undertaking was more congenial to Jean Bart

than the more regular warfare in large squadrons, and he resumed the old life, though under new conditions, with the utmost pleasure. The fishermen of Dunkirk rallied round him to a man, and when Jean Bart commissioned the *Railleuse* he could have shipped a crew twice as heavy. Although Bart was originally intended to fight against the English, his first encounter in his new command was against the Dutch, and here I might remark that up to this time Jean Bart had never exchanged a single shot with a vessel flying the Union Jack, if we except those fired from the main-deck guns of the *Seven Provinces* when he was serving as A.B. in Ruyter's Fleet.

Every prize he captured in the *King David*, the *Palme*, and the *Dauphin* flew Dutch colors, and Bart had yet to learn that there were seamen scouring the English Channel every whit the equals of those that hailed from Dunkirk; however, on this occasion he was once more to have a deal with a Mynheer.

After cruising for some weeks between Harwich and Calais, the look-out on the *Railleuse* signalled a convoy to windward. Shortening sail, Bart permitted the strangers to come up to him, when he discovered them to be a number of small Dutch traders under the escort of a powerful fifty-gun frigate. It was too late now to avoid an action, even had Bart so willed it, but he judged that his two vessels well handled ought to be more than a match for the Dutchman, and even if they could not capture her, they might inflict serious damage on her convoy.

Though commanding a Corsair primarily intended to capture trading-ships, and so to turn war into a mercantile speculation, Bart felt that, holding the king's commission, he would be equally performing his duty

were he to attack and sink an enemy's man-of-war. He consequently determined on giving fight to his big adversary with his own ship, whilst the *Serpente* should busy herself in capturing the convoy. The self-imposed task was a perilous one, for the frigate carried twice as many guns as the *Railleuse*, and as she bore proudly down to accept the proffered combat, appeared not only to be ably handled, but to be very powerfully manned.

The tactics of the Dutchman were evident; she meant to close on the *Railleuse*, rake her with a broadside delivered at pistol-range, and then having dismasted her and rendered her incapable of manœuvring, to perform the same task with the *Serpente*, and capture both craft at her leisure—or, should they fail to surrender, sink them.

Jean Bart divined the plan, but he had fought Dutchmen before this, and was little concerned at the issue of the encounter; putting a couple more trusty men at the helm, he ordered the hands on deck to lie close, and still stood on his course parallel to the frigate. She, with all sail set, was overhauling the *Railleuse*—coming up, in fact, hand over hand on her weather quarter. Bart eyed her attentively now she was within hailing distance.

Still not a shot. The most intense silence reigned on both ships. Now the bowsprit of the frigate was abreast of the poop-rail of the Frenchman, now it crept up to her main-rigging, now, and as the voice of the Dutch captain's "Fire," came clear on the breeze, Bart in tones of thunder shouted "Starboard!" and the *Railleuse*, flying up in the wind, crashed into the mizen-chains of the great frigate, and the small-arms men of Dunkirk, springing to their feet, poured a murderous volley on to the deck of the Dutchman, whilst two guns on the fore-

castle of the Corsair, double shotted with canister, swept the frigate with their point-blank discharge.

Ere the captain of the Dutch vessel could realize what Bart's manœuvre might portend, for he little thought the Frenchman would be rash enough to attack a vessel double his own size, Jean Bart and near two hundred of his fellow-townsmen were on the *Seahorse's* deck.

And now the fight waxed furious; the guns on the main deck of the Dutchman were quickly reloaded and trained on to the sides of the *Railleuse*, which for a moment or two could only bring her forward guns to bear on her enemy; but as she gradually swung round broadside on to the *Seahorse*, and the two vessels grappled in their deadly embrace, the artillery duel became more equal; the forward battery of the frigate was useless, and through the after ports French sailors poured on board.

Nothing could withstand their ardour. Were not they men of Dunkirk, and had not Jean Bart himself, now a commander in the French Navy, commenced life by clambering through the hawse-hole of a Corsair? The Dutch fought bravely too, but, out-manœuvred, they grew faint-hearted, and when their captain sank to the deck, his skull fractured by a blow from a boarding-pike, the first lieutenant handed his sword to Captain Bart, and surrendered his ship.

In the meantime the *Serpente*, in obedience to orders, had been overhauling the convoy, and on Bart's signal of recall it was seen had placed prize crews in nine vessels; with his ten prizes, the frigate badly crippled, her rudder and mizen-mast both shot away, Jean Bart bore up for Boulogne, the nearest port. The *Railleuse*, too, had suffered severely, having been hulled

so badly that the pumps were kept going night and day.

On the following morning, when within sight of land, a vessel was descried in full chase, and as she overhauled the slow-sailing squadron, she was soon made out to be an English cruiser. Bart was loth to lose his prizes, yet to fight with the *Railleuse* crippled and sinking was an impossibility; throwing himself therefore into his long-boat with thirty of his picked men, he transferred his flag to the *Serpente*, and ordered his first lieutenant, M. de Guermont, to convoy the prizes into Boulogne; then wearing ship he bore down to meet the Englishman—the first English vessel he had yet encountered.

Steadily the enemy bore down upon him, and as in the case of the *Seahorse*, captured on the preceding day, without firing a shot. Would she, as the Dutchman did, trust to an artillery duel, or would she cling to the old English tactics, and trust to boarding? Small time for debating on the course to be pursued, and ere Bart could pour one broadside into her the Englishman had crashed into his fore-rigging, and the English boarders were on his decks.

For close on an hour the two crews fought with desperation; now a steady rush on the part of the men of Dunkirk would sweep the enemy from the *Serpente*, and Bart, sword in hand, would lead his men on to the holystoned decks of the English sloop; then a well-timed volley from the small-arms men on the poop, and a wild charge by the English sailors, and the French in their turn were borne back to their own craft, and the frequent loud report of guns told that there were some on board each ship who still hoped the day would be decided by the more powerful engines of war.

These last were right; depressing their pieces and

using heavy charges of powder, the French gunners were sending round-shot after round-shot clean through the hull of the English ship, and she was soon seen to be settling low in the water. To those engaged in the deadly struggle on her decks, this was not noticeable, but to those whose duties kept them at the tiller of the *Serpente*, the fact gradually dawned that the English ship was sinking; now her rail was on a level with that of the little *Serpente*, and now it sank below it, and now her upper deck, slippery with blood and encumbered with dead and dying, was clear to every eye on the smaller ship.

The drums of the *Serpente* beat the rally, and with voice and bugle Bart recalled his men and shouted to the English to surrender. Axe and hatchet were now plied to the ropes by which the two ships were lashed together and they drifted apart. Bart swung out his boats to save the vanquished crew. Some few had sought refuge on the *Serpente* ere she forged ahead, but many still remained on their own ship.

Lying on their oars to avoid being caught in the vortex of the sinking ship, the French sailors shouted to their late foe, to spring overboard and swim to the boats, and these, seeing their vessel could not float much longer, made every effort to save themselves. The *Serpente*, hove to but a couple of hundred yards off, offered them every shelter, though the British sailor knew full well that the decks of the Corsair were but the *avant-scène* of a French prison.

Still life is precious to all, and as the frigate dipped her nose into the troubled waters, and then, lifting high her stern in the air, dived to the depths of the Channel, there were but three men who preferred death to dishonour, and those three were officers of the ill-fated craft.

Her decks encumbered with prisoners, her scuppers almost flush with the water, and her main-yard shot away, the *Serpente* would have experienced some difficulty in reaching Boulogne, but the noise of the firing was heard from shore, and the near approach of the *Railleuse* and her convoy warned the good people of that port that a second fight was being waged, and that help would be acceptable. Some *chasse-marées* putting out from the harbor made for the sinking *Serpente*, and by their aid Bart was enabled to work his crippled craft home in safety.

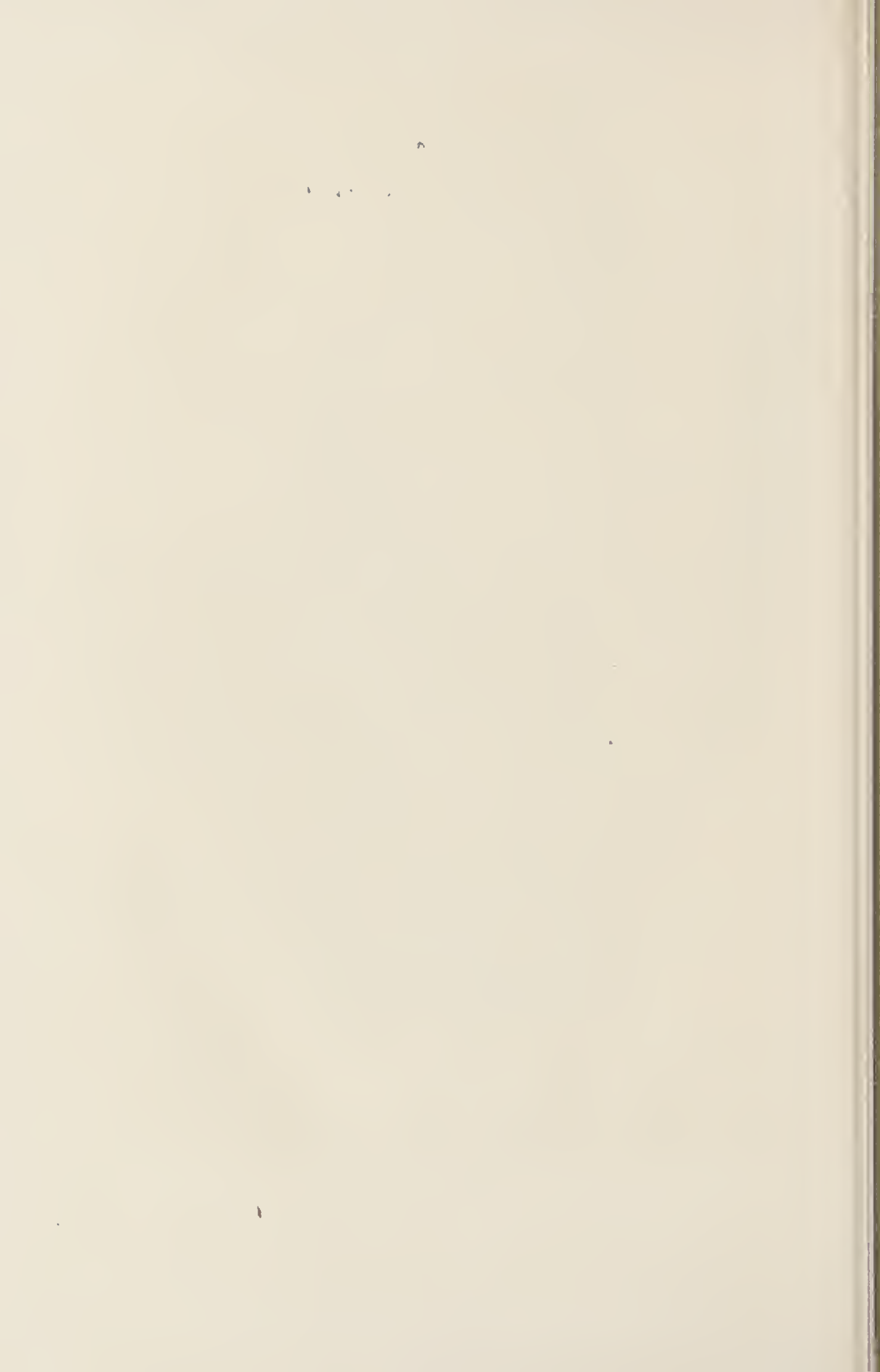
It was some weeks before the *Railleuse* and *Serpente* were in a fit condition to be worked round to Dunkirk, and when they did reach that port it was found such extensive repairs were necessary that it would be impossible to re-commission them until the following year.

Seignelay and his partners in the venture were more than satisfied with the conduct of Jean Bart, but the old class jealousy broke forth, and in order to allow the nobility to share in the honors and glory of his next campaign, a new captain was appointed to the *Serpente* in the shape of the Chevalier de Forbin, a young aristocrat of undeniable skill and gallantry, but with the most sublime contempt for all not born in the purple. In his Memoirs, Forbin is ever unjustly disdainful of such men as Jean Bart and Duguay Trouin, though with equal truth it may be said that he expresses no very high opinion of Trouville, D'Estrades, or indeed of any one save the Chevalier de Forbin.

Early in April, 1689, the two vessels were once more ready for sea; fresh masts and spars, some heavier guns, and an increased sail area had improved the *Railleuse* and *Serpente* beyond recollection, and Bart trusted he might equal, if not excel his successes of the



*"It is necessary that he should get accustomed to this sort of music,"
said the father.*



preceding year. On the 25th of April two prizes were captured, two Spaniards, one of four hundred tons, laden with wine, and the second with mahogany. Less than a week later, after an exciting chase, they overhauled and boarded a Dutch Corsair of fourteen guns.

By some accident the boarding grapplings carried away, and the Corsair, forging ahead, gave the two vessels some trouble to come up to her; in the meantime the handful of men thrown on board her had been overpowered and slain. This so irritated the Frenchmen that on carrying the ship later on in the day, they refused to give quarter, and had it not been for the personal interference of Jean Bart and Forbin, there is no doubt they would have kept their word.

It was on this occasion that Bart, noticing that his son blanched as the round-shot whistled through the rigging, ordered him to be lashed to the mast. "It is necessary that he should get accustomed to this sort of music," said the father as he gave the necessary orders. The lad was but fourteen years of age, and as the engagement fought that day was neither short nor bloodless, he might well be excused for feeling nervous; in after years Jean Bart had every reason to be proud of the boy whom he so rudely taught to hide his feelings.

At the close of this cruise Jean Bart addressed an able memorandum to the Minister of Marine, based on Colbert's well-known maxim that I have already quoted.

He suggested that Government should arm a certain number of light frigates, the smartest sailors to be found, man them with picked men, unite them in groups under the command of a sailor thoroughly conversant with the seas in which they were destined to cruise, and hurl these groups on the merchant-vessels which

frequent the Channel, the Northern Ocean, and the Mediterranean.

Impressed as Seignelay personally was with the idea, he was unable to persuade the Grand Monarch to adopt it; the army absorbed the treasury of the nation, and the navy was allowed to exist in comparative neglect. The Minister of Marine, however, fully realized the enormous benefits to be derived from the style of warfare in which Bart was *facile princeps*, and as an outbreak of war with England was daily dreaded, he sent instructions to the Intendant at Dunkirk to bring forward the *Railleuse* again for commission, and to join with her another frigate, the *Jeux* (which was to replace the *Serpente*), as well as the larger prize taken from the Spaniards in Bart's last cruise, and a small frigate recently built at Dunkirk. These four vessels were to be placed under the command of Jean Bart for the purpose of scouring the Channel.

As soon as these new vessels had been armed and brought forward for commission, Bart was ordered to proceed to Havre with them and the *Railleuse* and *Jeux*, and thence convoy to Brest a fleet of thirty merchant-ships. The task involved more danger than the Minister anticipated, for English ships of war patrolled the Channel with frequency, and were extremely unlikely to allow such a formidable fleet to escape their systematic search.

The result might have been foreseen. Two days after leaving Havre a couple of strange sail were reported; the strangers came gradually into view, first topgallant-sails, then top-sails, then the courses of two large ships were distinctly visible, and as they drew nearer and nearer their frowning ports could be counted, whilst the flowing pennants at the mast-head and the ensign at the

mizen-peak showed them to be English men-of-war.

These ships were undoubtedly far superior in metal and crews to the four Frenchmen, nevertheless Bart determined on giving battle, and rapidly decided on his plan of action.

With the *Railleuse* and *Jeux* he would attack and endeavour to carry by boarding the larger ship—the *Nonsuch*, forty-eight—whilst the two smaller frigates of his squadron should keep the smaller Englishman, mounting forty-two guns, employed; the convoy, thus freed from danger, were to carry on sail and shape a course for Brest.

Unfortunately Bart's subordinate commanders, always excepting Forbin, were not men of the same calibre as their commander, and after receiving one broadside from their enemy they hauled down their flags; this enabled the commander of the *Nonsuch* to attack the *Railleuse* and *Jeux* with two powerful ships, and never for a moment left the battle in doubt, although the heroism with which Bart and Forbin fought in order to save their squadron was of the very highest order.

For upwards of two hours the battle raged, and when at last the *Railleuse* struck, every single officer of the *Nonsuch* was killed or wounded, and her boatswain, one Robert Sincock, received Jean Bart's sword; Forbin had received six or seven wounds, Bart a bad scalp wound. But though the fight had been gallantly fought and the victory dearly won, the French captains had the proud satisfaction of knowing that the convoy which had been entrusted to their care had not been molested, and that the losses inflicted on their assailants in officers and men were nearly double that which they themselves had suffered.

Having placed prize crews on board the four captured

ships, Sincock bore up for Plymouth, and in the castle under watch and ward the French captains were safely lodged, but were allowed not only to receive visitors from the outer world, but the services of their own personal servants.

It was not long ere a plan of escape was decided on. Both captains, prior to the surrender of their ships, had secreted in their chests considerable sums of money; they knew full well that a golden key would open most prison doors. Through the dearly-purchased aid of the Flemish doctor who was called in to attend the wounded prisoners, a boat was purchased, fitted out, and provisioned. All efforts to win over the co-operation of the prison officials failed, and it was determined to resort to the time-honoured expedient of filing the window-bars and descending the walls by means of a rope extemporized out of their bed-clothes.

On a stormy night, when the wind and rain beating against the outer wall drove the sentries to seek the shelter of the lee of the prison, the two captains, warned by their faithful servants of the laxity of their guards, quickly filed through the small portion still left of the iron bars, and lowering themselves by the ropes, hastened to the spot where their boat was drawn up in charge of a heavily-indemnified fisherman. Bart had in his early days been long accustomed to Channel cruises in an open boat, and this venture was nothing new to him; to Forbin and the Flemish doctor, who shared his perils, the danger was vivid enough.

The task of launching the boat in face of such a heavy sea was one of considerable difficulty, and when this was surmounted, there was the additional danger of falling into the hands of the small cruisers which patrolled the entrance to the port. Fortunately, owing to

the heavy weather, these vessels that night showed a lack of vigilance, and when morning dawned and the wind fell to a strong steady north-westerly breeze, the coast of England was already out of sight.

The voyage presented no further difficulties, and forty-eight hours after leaving Plymouth the fugitives beached their boat at Hanqui, a small village near St. Malo. To the Intendant of that port full accounts were rendered of their action with the *Nonsuch*, the cowardly desertion of De Guermont, their capture, and escape. Having thus acquitted themselves of their official obligations, the two captains separated, Forbin hastening to Versailles to claim a reward from the king; Jean Bart to Dunkirk with the object of obtaining further employment and wiping out what he imagined would be the stigma attaching to him on account of his last engagement.

Seignelay held other views than Jean Bart on this question, and within a few days of the arrival of Bart at Dunkirk he received the gratifying intelligence that as a reward for his past brilliant services, more especially as a reward for his gallant action with the *Nonsuch*, his majesty had been pleased to direct that a commission as Capitaine de Vaisseau should be conferred on him, in lieu of his commission as Capitaine de Frigate lost in the capture of the *Railleuse*. Forbin was similarly honoured; indeed, if we may accept the statement in his Memoirs as accurate, it would appear that Jean Bart owed his advancement not to the high value set on his services by the king, but to the personal solicitation of one Chevalier de Forbin.

In the archives of Dunkirk, where many precious relics of Jean Bart are treasured, this Commission of Captain may yet be seen, as also the one captured in the

Nonsuch. Such is the fortune of war—seven years after, on the 4th January, 1696, Duguay Trouin, in the *François*, after a desperate fight, captured this very ship, the *Nonsuch*, and was thus enabled to restore to Jean Bart and Forbin their commissions, which were found framed in the captain's cabin.

On Jean Bart's arrival at Dunkirk, he found that Seignelay had already devised fresh schemes for his employment, and that Patoulet, the Intendant of Marine, was busily engaged in fitting out a small squadron which, under Bart's command, was destined to intercept the Dutch fleet, which at this season of the year annually brought to the Scheldt the produce of Russian ports. Unfortunately, considerable delay occurred in the armament of these ships, and it was not until the middle of November, 1687, that Bart set sail with the *Jason* (45), *Opiniâtre* (26), *Capricieuse* (24).

On the 19th of the same month he captured off the Doggerbank a Dutch brigantine, the *Saint Antoine*, and on the following day a fine English bark, the *Rose of the Sea*, conveying 450 Dutch soldiers to Edinburgh for service under William the Third. The *Rose of the Sea* was in no position to resist the vastly superior force (so far as guns were concerned) opposed to her, and hauled down her flag without firing a shot. Her capture necessitated the return of the little squadron to Dunkirk, for it was impossible that Jean Bart could spare a prize crew sufficiently numerous to overawe the crowd of soldiers on the decks.

It now being too late to hope to intercept the Dutch fleet, Bart was ordered to proceed to Hamburg and escort thence to France two large vessels laden with gunpowder required for the king's service. In cruising off the mouth of the Elbe, whilst waiting for his convoy,

Bart fell in with and captured three Dutch whalers, and being unable to convoy them back to France he admitted them to ransom for the sum of 3800*l*. On his homeward voyage another vessel, the *Huron*, laden with timber and salt fish, hauled down her flag and accompanied the squadron to Dunkirk.

In the following year Jean Bart, now in command of the frigate *Alcyon*, bore a prominent part in Tourville's naval fight on the 10th June, off the south coast of England, at which Torrington was accused of allowing the Dutch to withstand the full attacks of the French fleets. Here again aristocratic jealousy led to the exclusion of Jean Bart's name from the admiral's despatches, though for some days previous to the engagement, he was detached from the fleet to gather information concerning the enemy, and spent the night before the battle in an open boat, satisfying himself as to the accuracy of his information, and drawing up for the admiral a plan in which the exact position of the enemy's ships was laid down.

Despite these gallant services, performed at great personal risk, Bart was ignored by Tourville in the pompous despatches which announced his barren victory of Beachy Head.

After the dispersion of the English fleet, Tourville returned to Brest, whilst Bart, in obedience to instructions, stood to the eastward, for the purpose of destroying the enemy's commerce in the North Sea. His successes in the *Alcyon* must have reminded him of his most prosperous Corsair days. In the short space of a fortnight twelve prizes; an English barque, the *Resolution*; a Dutch brigantine and ten craft sailing under Hamburg colors were captured, the latter ransomed for a sum of 31,750*l*., the two former carried into Dun-

kirk. Having reshipped his prize crew, he once more took up his station off the Dutch coast, and once more pursued an uninterrupted career of victory. Cruising off the Doggerbank he inflicted terrible losses on the fishing fleets, and after a sharp struggle he boarded and captured a Dutch frigate of 28 guns.

With the new year Jean Bart was appointed to a new ship, the *Entendu*, a splendid vessel mounting 70 guns with a crew of 400 men, and his first employment was in the Channel squadron commanded by Tourville. Such work gave no scope to Bart's peculiar talents, and was at the same time particularly distasteful to him; the haughty, supercilious manner of the French naval officer accorded little with his innate simplicity, and he longed for orders to free himself from what he looked on as the servitude of the service. The death of Seignelay in the preceding month (3rd Nov., 1690), opened up to Jean Bart fresh visions of the accomplishment of his great scheme—namely the destruction of English and Dutch commerce by squadrons of swift-sailing craft under picked commanders.

Seignelay, whilst secretly approving of the scheme, did not hesitate to borrow it in parts, and to turn these parts to his own advantage. His own personal greed prevented his giving full effect to Jean Bart's views, and instead of scouring the Channel with groups of cruisers, equipped at the king's expense, he commissioned one small group, as we have previously seen, at the joint charge of the Minister of War and of himself, and drew large profits from Bart's successful cruises.

Phélipaux de Pontchartrain, the new Minister of Marine, threw himself cordially into Jean Bart's scheme, and despite the jealousy and opposition evinced by a certain clique at Versailles, sent instructions to the in-

tendant at Dunkirk that Jean Bart was to be assisted in every way in fitting out his squadron. Forbin so far conquered his aversion to serving under a plebeian as to solicit a command in Jean Bart's squadron.

Some few months necessarily elapsed before Jean Bart's little flotilla was ready for sea. News of his intentions had oozed out, and the port of Dunkirk was rigorously blockaded by an English squadron under Benbow; but the *habile* Bart waited until a heavy southerly gale had cleared the immediate neighbourhood of the blockading squadron, and then putting to sea, evaded the look-out ships.

On finding Bart had escaped, Benbow at once gave chase, two of the English ships got within a league of him, the rest were three leagues astern; seeing the French outsailed him, Benbow gave up the pursuit.

The result of his first action proved the justice of Jean Bart's views on the value of small squadrons of light ships. On the 26th July, after a combat of four hours' duration, in which the enemy were considerably overmatched, he captured four English merchantmen under convoy of a forty-four gun frigate. Two days later he steered into the middle of the Dutch fishing fleet and burnt eighty-four of them.

His decks now being encumbered with prisoners, he steered to the westward and disembarked over 800 English and Dutchmen on the coast of Scotland. Then, standing to the southward, anchored at the mouth of the Tyne, and disembarked a powerful landing-party under the Chevalier Forbin, with orders to ravage the country as much as was possible within the space of four and twenty hours.

Over 300 houses were burnt, an immense amount of valuables carried away, and all the wheat in the neigh-

bourhood destroyed. The approach of a body of troops compelled Forbin to fall back on the coast, and he re-embarked under cover of the guns of the squadron, having lost but one man killed.

On the 24th of November, Bart re-entered Dunkirk with treasure and merchandise amounting to 100,000*l.*, and with four large ships as prizes. Of the damage committed in the raid on the Northumbrian coast it is impossible to make any estimate; it at any rate showed to the English that their shores were open to a hostile descent, and doubtless served their descendants a very salutary lesson.

A short cruise in the month of December, enabled Jean Bart to add to his list of prizes six Dutch merchant-ships laden with grain, and a fifty-gun frigate which had them in escort. In the course of this service he brought himself into conflict with the Admiralty authorities. Rumours had been persistently circulated that in ransoming prizes, Jean Bart had always retained for his own use very considerable sums, and had systematically understated the amounts received. Patoulet, the Intendant of Dunkirk, accordingly placed an official on board the *Entendu*, as a sort of Admiralty agent, to overhaul Bart's accounts.

As might have been anticipated, constant quarrels supervened, and Bart maintaining his right to be captain on board his own ship, clapped the officious official into irons, and steered home to Dunkirk. Patoulet's indignation was extreme, and he made the strongest representations to Pontchartrain on the subject. Bart retorted with acrimony, and finally the minister summoned the irate captain to Versailles to give an account of his own behaviour.

Innumerable are the stories told of the conduct of the

simple captain at Versailles, but they have little to do with his career as a Corsair of France. Both sovereign and minister treated him with the most perfect cordiality, and if any suspicions ever existed in Pontchartrain's mind as to the probity of our hero they were speedily dispelled.

So struck was the Grand Monarch with the modesty and simplicity of Jean Bart, that it is stated he openly said at a *levée*, "Jean Bart, I would to God I had ten thousand men like you."

"I can well believe it," naively replied the sailor, looking simply round on the perfumed courtiers, who regarded his appearance at the court with indignation.

The winter of 1691-2 was spent by Jean Bart ashore. Pontchartrain judged it expedient not to excite too much the jealousy of naval officers by a too continuous employment of one who had entered the service, not by the regular door of favouritism, but by the back entrance of merit. In the following spring (1693), however, he was to join the flag of Tourville in the *Glorieux* frigate (62). In this vessel he was present at the disastrous fight of La Hogue, where the French fleet, overpowered by numbers, was broken into fragments and destroyed piecemeal.

The *Glorieux*, however, escaped, and again in the following year was attached to the fleet assembled under Tourville at Brest for the purpose of attacking a heavy fleet of merchantmen *en route* from the Mediterranean to the Channel. Having once cleared the Straits of Gibraltar, the English admiral looked on his convoy as safe (little dreaming that Louis XIV. had collected another fleet), and made his way home, leaving but a small squadron of ships of war in charge of the valuable Smyrna fleet. Off Cape St. Vincent, Tourville fell in

with the English squadron, attacked and dispersed it, destroying property estimated at many millions. Bart on this occasion, carried by boarding two fine Dutch Indiamen which had joined company with the English fleet a few days before the battle.

Whilst Tourville bore up for Brest, Jean Bart was directed to take the frigates *Moor*, (52), *Fortuné*, (52), *Mignon*, (44), *Comte*, (40), *Adroit*, (40), to Vleker in Norway, thence to escort a convoy of merchant-vessels laden with wheat for the French markets. Having satisfactorily accomplished this mission, he once more put to sea, and on the 15th of November was fortunate enough, off the Doggerbank, to capture three armed English cruisers—the *Milford*, *Warrington* and *Prince of Wales*. The first-named ship being an exceedingly smart craft, he determined to retain her; therefore, gutting the other vessels of their armament and valuables, he sold them to their captains for a sum aggregating 5000*l.*, and conveyed the *Milford* alone into port, reaching Dunkirk in the early days of December without having met with any further adventure.

Once more the winter was passed ashore, and once more with the spring, Jean Bart was ordered to proceed to Vleker and escort to France a large convoy of merchantmen, laden with grain. To the squadron commanded the previous year the frigates *Bienvenue* and *Portefaix* were added. Bart's instructions were not merely to convoy the fleet home, but to attack and capture any enemy's vessels he might meet.

On the 28th of June, 1694, the little squadron sailed, and on the following morning a large fleet was seen to windward. Beating up to it, to Jean Bart's dismay it proved to be the very convoy he was about to escort, which, leaving Vleker before the time appointed, had

been captured by a fleet of eight Dutch men-of-war, under the command of Vice-Admiral Hidde de Viries. Although immensely outnumbered, Jean Bart determined to attempt to retake the fleet; its loss meant famine in the land, and this fact, well-known to the Dutch authorities, had induced them to send forged orders to Vleker, and to take other steps for the capture of so rich a prize.

The immense superiority of the Dutch gave Jean Bart no hope of victory were he to permit an artillery battle to be entered on, he therefore hung out the signal for his vessels to close on the enemy, and carry their ships by boarding.

Laying himself alongside the *Prince de Frise*, Jean Bart himself led on the boarders; and as the whole crew of the *Glorieux* formed the boarding-party, which poured on the decks of the Dutch Flag-ship whilst a great number of her men were employed below working her lower deck-guns, the French in this struggle had the advantage, and were able to prevent the Dutchmen in the lower batteries from aiding their messmates above. For close on half an hour the fight raged with relentless fury on the Dutch ship's decks, and then Admiral Hidde Von Vries, to avoid further bloodshed, hauled down his flag. Over 300 dead and wounded lay on his decks, and he himself was so grievously hurt that he died shortly after reaching Dunkirk.

The other vessels of the French squadron showed equal energy and determination; the *Fortuné* (52), without a moment's hesitation, laid herself alongside the *City of Flushing* (54), but the Dutchman cutting adrift the grappling-irons, crowded on all sail, and so escaped from the fight.

The *Comte*, though carrying but forty guns, pressed

on in pursuit, but was in her turn attacked by the *Princess Emilie*, a large two-decker armed with sixty-eight guns, and was compelled to sheer off and seek a weaker antagonist; the *Mignon* (44) after an extremely sharp conflict succeeded in compelling the *Stadenland*, a large vessel and carrying ten more guns, to strike her flag. The *Adroit* (40), found a worthy foe in the *Zee Reipe* of the same number of guns; but being attacked on the other quarter by *Oster Stelling* (54), was forced to signal the *Fortuné*, now disengaged, to come to her aid, and so was deprived of reaping the fruits of the capture of the *Zee Reipe*, which struck to the *Fortuné* after a few moments' experience of the boarding qualities of the men of Dunkirk.

Seeing the fate of their three consorts, the remaining Dutch ships, abandoning the convoy they had failed to preserve, stood off for the mouth of the Scheldt, and Jean Bart, signalling his own squadron to close round the recaptured convoy, and having placed strong prize crews on the three fine men-of-war he had captured, bore up at once for Dunkirk.

In the museum of that town there exists a somewhat indifferent picture, representing Jean Bart disembarking from the *Glorieux* amidst the plaudits of the whole population. Never before had such a sight been witnessed by the town of Dunkirk, yet in its day it had seen many thousand prizes borne into its harbour; but now their brave fellow-townsmen had not only recaptured the sixty vessels laden with wheat, the loss of which would have been such a terrible blow to France, but had torn them from a convoy carrying ninety-two guns more than his own squadron, and had safely brought into port three men-of-war of seventy-four, fifty-four, and forty guns, on one of which flew Bart's

flag surmounting the broad pennant of a Dutch Vice-Admiral.

On the day of his arrival at Dunkirk, Jean Bart at once despatched his son to Versailles, as bearer of his own written report of the engagement. The Minister of Marine received the lad with the greatest cordiality, and led him, travel-stained as he was, into the king's presence. The Grand Monarch's welcome was not less gracious, and to commemorate more particularly the victory that had dissipated all fears of the famine, which was even then threatening the country, the king gave instruction for a medal to be struck and distributed to all officers present in the engagement.

One of these medals still exists in the museum of Dunkirk. On the one side is an effigy of the Grand Monarch, with the words, "Ludovicus magnus, rex Christissimus;" on the other, the Goddess Ceres standing on the sea-shore, with hands outstretched and in them staffs of wheat, welcoming an approaching vessel, and the words, "Annona augusta: Fugatis aut Captis Bat: nav. MDCXCIX." In addition to this very rare distinction, Louis XIV. bestowed on Jean Bart the order of Saint Louis, granted him a patent of nobility, and handed to his young son Cornil, a commission as *Enseigne de vaisseau*, and further charged his Treasury with an annual payment of 2000*l.* to the gallant captain.

On the 13th July following, Bart, cruising off the mouth of the Meuse, fell in with a convoy of eighty small craft escorted by three Dutch frigates of forty-two, twenty-four, and sixteen guns. At once engaging the largest of the three, he sunk her, and then turned on the smaller craft, which, profiting by a favorable

wind and shoaling water, succeeded in shaking off their pursuer and escaping.

It subsequently transpired that the sunken ship carried treasure exceeding the value of 100,000*l*. The loss of this ship was a great blow to Bart, who ever regretted that he had not on this, as on so many former occasions, determined to trust his fortune entirely to his boarding-party.

In the course of the succeeding year the English, who in 1694 had bombarded with varying success St. Malo, Havre, and Dieppe, determined on reducing Dunkirk to ashes.

On the 6th of August, 1695, a powerful squadron of ships-of-war, mortar-boats, and fire-ships appeared off the port and subjected the town to a violent cannonade, throwing, it is said, over 1200 shells into the place. During this affair Jean Bart had disembarked his crew and taken charge of the Fort Bonne Espérance; the fire of his guns inflicted considerable damage on the enemy's squadron, a frigate of twenty-eight guns and two fire-ships sinking opposite its walls. That night, having failed to fire the town, and, according to a contemporary historian, not having inflicted a single louis' worth of damage, the English fleet withdrew.

The next year (1696), owing to a succession of bad harvests, Jean Bart was once again deputed to proceed to Flekkefiord to escort a convoy of grain-laden ships. The squadron under his command consisted of the *Maure*, 54, *Mignon*, 44, *Adroit*, 44, *Jersey*, 40, *Comte*, 40, *Alcyon*, 38, and *Milford*, 36 (this last being an English prize). News of his intended despatch having leaked out, Jean Bart, when ready to put to sea, found the port closely blockaded, and was compelled, as on

the previous occasion, to act with caution in order to avoid the beleaguering squadron.

Taking advantage of a dark night and a heavy north-westerly gale, which had induced the English squadron to run for shelter to their own coasts, Jean Bart with his well-found squadron beat out of the harbour and up into the North Sea. A week later he spoke two Danish vessels, and from them he learnt that a large Dutch fleet under Admirals Mindger and Wanzell was lying in the port of Christiania waiting for the departure of the French convoy in order to repeat their tactics of the previous year.

Bart determined to change his plan of action, and, instead of waiting for the convoy as he had intended, resolved first to attack and drive off the Dutch fleet, and then to escort the grain-ships peaceably to Dunkirk. A day or two later Bart learnt from other vessels that a large fleet of Dutch merchant-vessels was on the point of leaving the Baltic for the Scheldt and that Admiral Mindger had detached part of his fleet to escort them home. While beating up to the northward for the purpose of attacking the Dutchmen, Bart sighted the enemy's squadron on the 17th of June, about six miles to windward, and standing south-south-west. It consisted of eighty merchant-ships and five men-of-war—frigates only, two of 44, two of 38, and one of 24 guns. Jean Bart signalled his squadron to close on the flagship, and for the captains to come on board the *Maure* for orders.

In a few short impassioned sentences the brave Bart explained his plan of action. "Avoid all artillery duels, lay yourselves alongside the enemy's men-of-war, carry them by boarding, and then the merchant-vessels will have no chance of escape."

The *Maure*, *Jersey*, *Mignon*, *Adroit*, and *Comte* were

told off to attack the men-of-war, the *Alcyon* and *Milford* were ordered to watch events, offer assistance if necessary, but should they see all going on well to take steps for the capture of the convoy. Unfortunately that afternoon the wind fell, and the two squadrons lay within sight of each other: the Dutch unable to escape, the French unable to attack. At dawn, on the 18th, seeing the Dutch squadron gradually edging to the southward under a light northerly breeze, Bart, who during the night had drifted some distance from them, at once put his squadron about and made sail after them.

At eight a.m. Bart overtook the enemy's fleet and at once bore down on the flagship. In passing, however, he ran to windward of a smaller craft, the *Dent Arent*, and poured in such a broadside at close range as to entirely dismast her; then signalling the *Milford* to board and capture her, he moved on to attack the *City of Haarlem*.

The Dutch commodore endeavored to avoid the *Maure*, but in bearing away from her she fouled a merchant-vessel, and this enabled Bart to lay the *Maure* alongside and throw his boarders on to the Dutchman's decks; the struggle was of short duration but sharp enough while it lasted, Bart's casualties amounting to seventeen killed. The Dutch had suffered far more severely, the commodore, Bokem, and fifty-one men lying dead on the *City of Haarlem's* decks.

In the meantime the *Jersey* and *Alcyon* passing on either side of *Lord Holmes*, an English-built ship flying the tricolour of the States-General, poured in most destructive volleys. The *Jersey*, wearing ship when she was a cable's length ahead, discharged a second broadside which raked the unfortunate Dutchman, and left her an easy prey for her own boarders. The *Alcyon*, as

agreed on between the two ships, stood on to attack the *Meldam*, and after a desperate hand-to-hand fight, in which the Dutch captain perished, she too struck her flag.

There was now but the *Sauldeck* remaining of the whole Dutch squadron; this vessel, ably commanded, gave the *Mignon* an infinity of trouble before she was captured, and this was not effected until the *Adroit* had passed alongside and poured in broadside after broadside under her lee.

Jean Bart learning from the officers of the *City of Haarlem* that the fleets of Admirals Mindger and Wanzell were but a few hours' sail astern, hastened to put prize-crews on board the captured men-of-war, and instructed the officers in command of the prizes to bear up for Dunkirk. As for the merchant-fleet, unfortunately no time could be spared to pursue those that were standing off in-shore, but the *Comte* and the *Milford* adroitly performed the task assigned to them, and succeeded in capturing nine of the largest.

Barely had the prize-crews been placed on the captured vessels when the look-outs signalled thirteen large ships away to leeward; these proved, as Jean Bart feared, the leading vessels of Wanzell's fleet, and comprised two line-of-battle ships of 74 guns, two of 64, and one of 60, three frigates of 46, one of 40, and one of 34, in all 548 guns.

The inopportune arrival of this powerful squadron in nowise disconcerted the intrepid sailor. His men, inflamed with their recent victory, were ready enough for another fight and more than confident of success; but some of the ships had suffered severely in the recent engagement, notably the *Mignon*, whose rudder was disabled, and it was idle to hope to fight a successful bat-

tle with half his crews manning the Dutch prizes, and with his own decks encumbered with over a thousand prisoners.

Signalling his captains to come on board for orders, Bart at once communicated his plans. All the prisoners were to be placed on board the *Dent Arent* and allowed to proceed to Holland, the captains and senior officers only being retained as hostages, and the Dutch officers jointly signing an agreement that the *Dent Arent* should be sent round to Dunkirk as soon as she had landed her discharged prisoners. The guns of the remaining four ships were to be hove overboard, their powder damped, all valuables removed, and vessels then set on fire.

Jean Bart had no wish to expose his own squadron to loss, as he felt that loss must inevitably result from an engagement with such a vastly superior force; but he was determined that the enemy should reap the full loss of his gallant action of the morning, he therefore shortened sail until the burning men-of-war and merchant-ships were utterly consumed, and then crowding on all sail stood down south for Dunkirk. Stupefied at Bart's audacity, and fearing that crews might be on some of the burning ships, Wanzell's squadron wasted some time in endeavouring to offer aid; when the whole truth was learnt, and the signal for chase hung out, the French squadron was hull down and night supervening made good their escape.

The Dutch losses on this occasion amounted to four men-of-war and thirty-seven merchant-vessels burnt, their value being estimated at close on a million sterling; the commodore, one captain, and eight other officers were killed, whilst in the lower ranks eighty-seven men were killed and 143 wounded. The French losses

were but three officers and twenty-seven men killed, one officer and fifty-six men wounded.

Irrespective of this striking victory, the cruise was otherwise thoroughly successful; the Dutch fleets having been dispersed, the convoy reached the coast of France in safety, and Bart once more had been instrumental in saving France, if not from actual famine, at any rate from grievous want. The Grand Monarch was not forgetful of his services, for on the 1st of April, 1697, he was promoted to the rank of commodore, and placed in command of his Majesty's ships and squadrons in all the ports of Flanders, in the place of the Marquis de Lanzeron, deceased.

In the following year Jean Bart saw no active service, and the Peace of Ryswick in 1698 put an end to all hopes of further employment for the present. The peace, however, was not of long duration; within two years, Austria, England, and the States-General entered into what was termed the Grand Alliance, and once more declared war on France. Whilst busily preparing to meet his enemies on land, the Grand Monarch was not unmindful of the excellent service performed during the last war by his fleet, and was not likely to overlook those in particular of Jean Bart.

Instructions were at once forwarded to Dunkirk for that commodore to prepare a squadron for employment in the Channel, and a fine 74-gun ship, the *Fendant*, recently launched at Havre, was worked round to Dunkirk for Bart to commission as his flagship.

But Bart's last fight was fought, his last prize won. Never sparing himself when work was to be done, and never calling upon his men to do what he would not do himself, he slaved night and day in order to bring forward his squadron for sea. Night and day, wet and fine,

the indefatigable old commodore—not old in years, for he was but two-and-fifty, but grey and worn with wounds and exposure—was seen tramping round the dockyard encouraging the workmen and stirring up the sluggards.

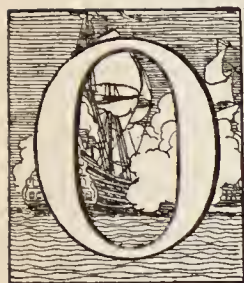
He was little used to the peculiar mental strain such work involved, and somewhat dreaded the responsibility attached to his new post. Large sums of money destined for wages, stores, and purchase of timber, sails, and cordage, naturally passed through his hands, and not blessed with a high-class education, Jean Bart was much exercised lest defalcations should be suspected. He had not forgotten Patoulet's suspicions.

The excitement connected with the administration part of his office produced a fever, and this coming on after a severe chill brought on pleurisy. The hardy seaman had suffered much in health of recent years, and he was in no condition now to battle with disease. Vainly he strove to carry on his work, still more vainly to bear up with the heroic remedies of that age. Cupping and blisters, blisters and cupping were the only specifics used by the faculty of Dunkirk, and they quickly did their work.

On the 27th of April, 1702, just five days after his first seizure, Jean Bart, who had faced death in a hundred deadly fights, passed peacefully away, in the little house in the Rue de l'Église: the house in which he had been born, and in which his father, the stout old Cornil Bart, too, had met his only conqueror.

CHAPTER III

Jacques Cassard of Nantes



OF Cassard's early life we know but little. This we know, that he was born in 1672, and that his father was the captain of a small craft trading between Nantes and the Levant. At his father's death, which happened when young Jacques was but ten years old, the widow found herself thrown on the world with three daughters and one son.

Utterly unprovided for, Madame Cassard turned to her friends for help. These friends at once determined that the boy should follow his father's calling, and he was straightaway shipped off to the coasts of Newfoundland in a fishing-brig hailing from St. Malo. Three years were passed in this way, years fraught with hardship and with peril, but serving in no small degree to accustom the future Corsair to a life of danger and privation, and inoculating him with a love of adventure.

At the age of fourteen, in 1686 the young Corsair, through the influence of his late captain, obtained an engagement in a Malouine Corsair, and passed the ensuing nine years of his life in this exciting calling. No particulars of this portion of his career are to be found, but that he gained more than mere local renown is evident, for we learn from the Archives of the Marine that when he was five-and-twenty (1697), the Baron

de Pointis selected him to command the bomb-ship attached to the squadron proceeding to Carthagenæ.

De Pointis was a man of noble birth and of considerable reputation in the king's fleet. He had served under Duquesne at Algiers, and with D'Estrées at Tripoli; he had commanded a line-of-battle ship in Tourville's memorable engagement with the English fleet on the 10th of July, 1690, and had been nominated one of the first Knights on the institution of the Order of St. Louis. As an aristocrat, and a member of the most aristocratic profession, it was natural that he should select none but men of birth and station to serve under him. That Cassard, erstwhile the cabin-boy of Nantes, should have been thus chosen, proves that though his early deeds have not been handed down to posterity, they were of such a nature as to have established his reputation amongst his contemporaries.

The expedition of M. de Pointis was one of those semi-filibustering affairs so often waged by France in distant climes. All the resources of the kingdom were needed for the carrying on of wars in Europe, and the French Government had little leisure, and still less money, to warrant it turning its thoughts further afield. Yet treasure was to be gained, and the enemies of France weakened, by descents on their far-off colonies, and the king's ministers turned willing ears to proposals from speculative filibusters who proposed these trans-oceanic excursions. When adequate guarantees were offered, king's ships were freely given, and the king's commission willingly bestowed on those ready to risk money and life in attacking the colonial possessions of the foes of France.

Just as the king would place one of his own ships at the disposal of a renowned Corsair, on the condition

that the State was put to no expense in the fitting of her out, and that one-tenth of the profits made during the cruise were paid into the king's coffers, so were the ministers ready to share in like manner in more ambitious flights. When M. de Pointis, the tried and trusted friend of Duquesne, of D'Estrées, and of Tourville, suggested to Pontchartrain, then Minister of Marine, that he was prepared to undertake a descent on Carthage, one of the richest Spanish settlements in South America, and submitted names of wealthy shipowners and merchants in Paris and Brittany, who were willing to advance all the funds for the venture, the minister gladly welcomed the proposal.

De Pointis' force consisted of ten line-of-battle ships carrying from seventy-four to fifty-six guns, four frigates carrying thirty-six, a bombship, and some smaller craft, in which were embarked 5000 troops destined to form the army of invasion. Pontchartrain, who took a warm interest in the undertaking, had sent instructions to M. Du Casse, governor of St. Domingo, to raise 1200 men from amongst the filibusters of the West Indian Islands, to add to the strength of the land forces, and he had also placed at M. de Pointis' disposal a number of engineers and artillery officers to direct the land operations.

Cassard, whose name for daring gallantry and smart seamanship had led to his selection by De Pointis, was nominated to the command of the bombship, and in this capacity he accompanied the fleet which left Brest on the 7th of January, 1697. The passage across the Atlantic, undertaken at the very worst season of the year, was fraught with extreme peril; a series of very heavy gales were encountered, and Cassard's craft, little adapted for such a perilous voyage, was compelled to

part company with the rest of the fleet, and it was only by dint of the greatest exertions that the strained and leaky bombship was safely navigated to the island of St. Domingo, which had been named as the point of rendezvous. There Cassard found the whole of the fleet assembled, and he also found that quarrels had already broken out between the haughty aristocrat, De Pointis, and Du Casse, the commander of the filibusters; these were for a time appeased, and after having filled up with water and provisions, the expedition set sail for Carthagena, reaching that port in June.

To the summons to surrender the governor returned a defiant answer, and on the ships standing in to bombard the city, the forts opened such a destructive fire that De Pointis was glad to seek an offing, and to take counsel of his captains on the course to be pursued. Cassard and Du Casse strongly urged an immediate attack, the latter volunteering to land his filibusters under cover of the fire of the fleet. The consultation was long and stormy, De Pointis inclined to delay, but the fiery arguments of Cassard and the filibuster commander carried the day, their enthusiasm spread to the other commanders, and it was finally determined that at dawn the fleet should stand in and bombard the forts, and that when Du Casse saw an opening he should dash ashore with his 1200 men, De Pointis promising to support him with the 5000 soldiers in the fleet.

On the following morning, favored by a gentle southeasterly breeze, the French squadron once more neared the forts, once more the Spanish batteries opened a deadly fire, but the ships stood boldly on, the little bombship attracting general notice by taking up a position within 400 yards of the strongest fort, and subjecting it to a most accurate and destructive fire. On

Cassard's craft was Du Casse, with over 100 of his filibusters, the rest in coasting schooners were anxiously awaiting the signal to disembark, which it was agreed on should be thrown out from Cassard's ship. When once De Pointis was fairly engaged, all timidity vanished, and the Spaniards, who, the evening before, had counted on an easy victory, were now speedily disenchanted.

The guns of the fleet were served with rapidity and precision, the artillery officers embarked by the thoughtful care of Pontchartrain had been distributed amongst the ships, and their skill and science was soon discernible. By 10 a.m. the fire of the forts had slackened, and Du Casse, seeing that the sea-face of the work nearest the bombship was in ruins, signalled to his filibusters to pull in and land, at the same time he and Cassard springing into the boats of the *galliot* headed the assault. Bravely did the Spaniards meet the attack, but the wild pirates of St. Domingo were not to be denied, and Cassard and the hardy Bretons who formed his crew were not backward in showing Du Casse's men that the Corsairs of Brittany were worthy descendants of the heroes who had planted the ermine of their province on the sterile coasts of Newfoundland and on the burning sands of Gaboon.

After a desperate fight, in which Spaniard and Frenchmen showed equal valour, the first fort was carried. Cassard then directing its guns on a neighbouring work, signalled to De Pointis to concentrate the fire of his fleet on the same fort, at the same time sending word that, as soon as its guns were silenced, he would carry it by assault.

Then step by step the various batteries were assaulted, and by evening the citadel alone remained in possession of the Spaniards, and from its walls the white

flag of surrender was also flying. Terms were speedily arranged, the garrison being permitted to march out with all the honors of war, leaving the city to the tender mercies of the conqueror. On the morrow with banners flying and drums beating, and accompanied by two small field-pieces, the garrison quitted the town. In their wake followed the citizens carrying whatever they were able, but as their burdens were limited to what the master and slaves could carry, much that was valuable was of necessity left behind; those citizens who preferred to remain in the city were guaranteed protection by the French commander.

Small protection was it in De Pointis' power to afford them. Regulars and filibusters, drunk with victory, spread through the streets; women seeking refuge in the churches were ravished at the very steps of the altar; officers striving to restore order were ruthlessly shot down by the maddened men, and scenes of carnage and wild rapine ensued—scenes, alas! too often re-enacted by troops more civilized than De Pointis' lawless followers.

De Pointis seemed powerless to act; and Du Casse, jealous of the treatment accorded him at St. Domingo, refused to hold his men in check—refused, because he too was powerless. Cassard, accustomed to the rough and ready discipline of a Corsair's deck, and to the stern justice of the *Jugements d'Oleron*, sought permission to restore order, and selecting a band of some 300 Bretons culled from the crews of the ships of war, he disembarked for the purpose of subduing the conquerors of Carthagera. And now ensued a second combat, a combat bloody and long sustained, but which in the end resulted in the triumph of order and discipline.

The mutineers, worn out by lust and drink, were ter-

rified at the stern examples shown by Cassard. They were little used to the prompt punishment meted out by the brave Breton, and the sight of their own miserable comrades shot down in the act of plunder staggered those who thought rapine the necessary sequel to victory. Posting strong parties at the gates of the city, Cassard steadily searched every street, and by nightfall of the second day after the capture of the town, he was able to assure De Pointis that order reigned in Carthagen. And at what a price!

It is said by a contemporary writer that the bodies of 370 women were buried by Cassard's orders, and that that stern judge had himself executed over twenty men who were caught red-handed in the act of plunder.

The next few days were spent in an organized search for treasure. In this De Pointis was much disappointed, as it transpired that the inhabitants, learning of the proposed expedition, had transported several hundred waggon-loads into the interior. Still the booty was not to be despised, over 350,000*l.* in hard specie were discovered in the city, besides a vast amount of gold and silver in bars, and a considerable quantity of plate, jewels, church ornaments, and other articles of value. What the total amount of prize was it is hard to say, but as it is asserted that the sum of 1,200,000 louis fell to the share of the filibusters, we may assume contemporary historians not to be far wrong when they maintain it exceeded three millions sterling.

In September, 1697, after an absence of nearly nine months, De Pointis re-entered Brest, and one of his first acts was to bring the gallant conduct of Cassard to the notice of the Court of Versailles. In his despatches to the king, Monsieur de Pointis specially singled out the Corsair officer for unqualified praise, and submitted his

name to the Minister of Marine for enrolment in the navy. Class prejudices were too strong, however, and Cassard was fain to content himself with the assurances of De Pointis' support and protection, and the hearty ovations granted him by his fellow-townsmen.

Failing employment in the Navy, Cassard now found himself compelled to accept the command of a private Corsair, fitted out especially after his own design by some merchants of Nantes. His fellow-townsmen were jealous that all his good deeds should be monopolized by the Malouines, who had come to look on him as a true representative of the Corsair city. On this craft Cassard cruised most successfully, until the severity of the winter compelled him to take the ship into port, there to lay her up until the summer should permit him to renew his operations.

An English brig, the *William Duncan*, bound from the West Indies, with rum and sugar, two large Dutch East Indiamen, and three small English traders fell into his hands during this cruise. The first-named, a well-armed and powerfully-manned craft, made a stout resistance, in the course of which the English captain and eleven of his crew were killed; Cassard losing eighteen of his own men killed and wounded. The capture of the *William Duncan* added not a little to the fame of Cassard, besides bringing him in a considerable sum. De Pointis, delighted at the fresh success of his *protégé*, once more brought all his influence at court to bear, with the view of obtaining him a commission in the navy.

Louis this time was not inexorable, and in the spring of 1700 Jacques Cassard was called to Versailles, and there interviewed by the Grand Monarch. "Monsieur Cassard," said the king, "your praise is in every one's

mouth, and M. de Pointis assures me you are lost in your present vocation. I have need of all the brave men I can find for my navy, and as you, they say, are the bravest of the brave, I have appointed you a lieutenant in my fleet, and have given M. Pontchartrain instructions to hand over to you a sum of 2000*l.* to enable you to support your position properly.”

Cassard, more accustomed to the rough life in the 'tween decks of a Corsair than to courts, found few words in which to express his thanks and gratitude to his monarch; but a legend has been handed down that, throwing himself at Louis' feet he embraced the padded calves of the astonished sovereign, and with tears in his eyes declared himself willing to die for one whose condescension was so overpowering.

Cassard's stay in Versailles was limited; his services were urgently needed at sea, and by Pontchartrain's instructions he immediately proceeded to Dunkirk, and there assumed the command of one of the king's corvettes, "*The Jersey*," a prize recently captured from the English. This ship he fitted out with all speed, and in her carried on a very successful campaign in the Channel, capturing in the course of the year 1698, no less than thirteen vessels flying the English and the Dutch flags; but his very successes roused the jealousy of the old naval school.

Gallant as French aristocrats ever were, they were not cast in the mould whence good Corsairs spring; they had not the hardy perseverance which prompted them to keep the sea in all seasons and in all weathers, to scour distant seas and lie off distant ports in the hope of picking up a stray prize.

They were ready enough to lay their ships alongside an English vessel of equal, aye! of superior size, or to

stand in to a stone-girt harbour, and try to knock its walls about the ears of its defenders; but they liked their deeds of daring to be performed in the company of their fellow-gallants, in the sight of nobles who should carry to Versailles lengthy reports of the glorious bravery of the blue blood of France. They were content that the humble *rôle* of harrying an enemy's commerce should be played by men who bore no arms and who knew no quarterings; but they waxed wroth that the successes of such men, whose hands betrayed the tar-pot, should be considered a passport to entrance into the king's own navy, and should entitle them to wear the king's own livery. Cassard's successes as a Corsair had brought him within the pale of court protection, and, alas! within the malevolent influence of court jealousy.

Like Duguay Trouin and other Corsairs, who by force of merit had earned the right of wearing the king's uniform, Cassard was destined for subordinate employment during the first few years of his service under the king. He had to pass through that great mill of discipline, a man-of-war, ere he was considered fit to exercise command over gentlemen, socially his superiors. He had to learn the niceties of French etiquette, and to forget the *Jugements d'Oleron*, which were to the Corsair the foundation of all law. He had to comfort himself that he should overcome the jealousies of his brother officers, and maintain in the face of their jaundiced reports, the high reputation already formed of his merits by the authorities at Versailles.

As a mere lieutenant of a man-of-war in times of peace, it is not to be wondered that all trace of Cassard should be lost during the early years of his naval career, or that he should soon have wearied of such un-

congenial employment. In his disgust at his new profession he turned to his old friends the shipowners of St. Malo, and his appeal was not in vain. They knew his real worth, and had enjoyed many material proofs of his value. As yet the prophet had but small reputation in his own country, and Nantes, forgetting his successes in the craft built for him on his return from Carthage, refused to entrust him with a command.

At St. Malo, however, he was more fortunate, and in June, 1705, he received a commission from the Count of Toulouse, then Lord High Admiral of France, to fit out a Corsair under the usual conditions. The Royal Treasury was in too impoverished a condition to give Cassard a ship furnished at the king's own expense, but there were vessels rotting in the king's dockyards which were always at the disposition of enterprising merchants, who would undertake the risk of fitting them out for war and providing them with efficient crews.

A little group of Malouine merchants readily found the necessary funds, and on the 27th of June, 1705, Cassard hoisted his flag on the *Saint William*, a small craft carrying eight guns, and manned by a crew of sixty-eight men gathered from the scum of the seafaring population of the Breton seaport.

Cassard's first cruise was fruitless enough, and in the month of November he returned to St. Malo, and paid off his vessel without having made a single prize. The weakness of his crew and the lightness of his armament had cost him many a pang. His heaviest gun threw a shot weighing but three pounds, and his crew being composed of men of all nations—the failures too of all professions, for but few of them were real seamen—were scarcely to be depended on in the hour of danger. Cassard felt that he must renounce all attempt of carrying

on his depredations in the open sea; the *Saint William* was no match for the well-found Dutch or English trader, carrying often as many guns and as heavy a crew as a sloop-of-war, and he determined therefore to harry the shores of Ireland in the hopes of picking up some coasting-craft.

In March, 1706, he again set sail from St. Malo, and steered a direct course for the Head of Kinsale. Hoisting English colors, he was readily mistaken for a coasting-vessel, and was thus enabled to capture in the course of a short fortnight six small traders, which he admitted to ransom for the sum of 650*l.* sterling. Taking the captains of these ships on board the *Saint William* as security for the payment of the bills drawn in payment of the ransom money, Cassard bore up for Brest, and handed his six prisoners over to the Naval Commandant of that port on the 6th of April, 1706.

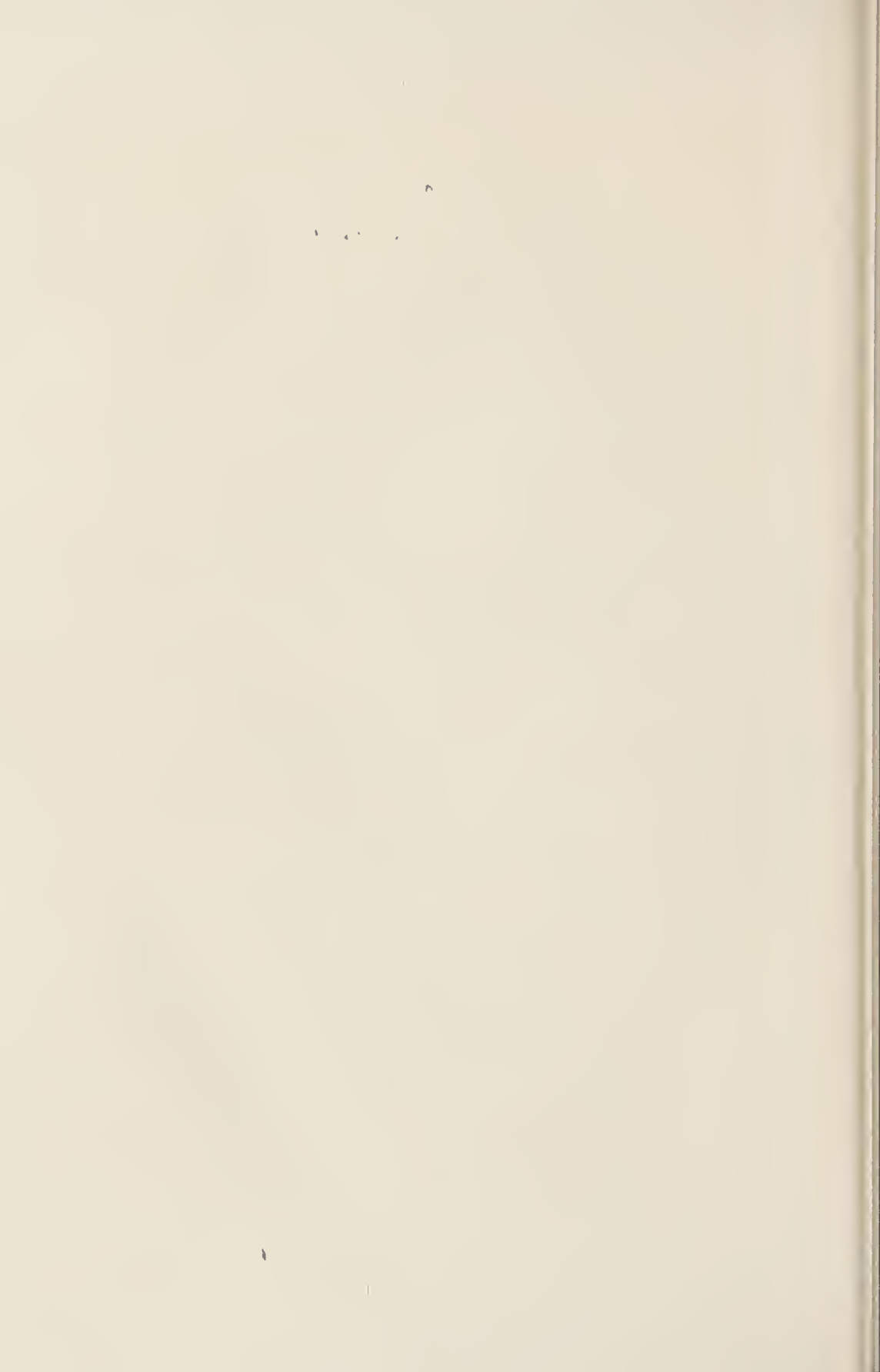
After a short stay in Brest to take in food and water, Cassard once more set sail for the coast of Ireland. Within twenty-four hours of Brest, however, he sighted a vessel sailing under Dutch colors, which summoned him to send a boat on board with his papers. Cassard took no notice of the "summoning gun," but kept steadily on his course; the Dutchman thereupon fired a shotted gun across the *Saint William's* bows, and no notice having been taken of the second and more peremptory summons, the Dutchman pressed on all sail and cleared for action.

The *Saint William* was far the smaller craft of the two, but the recent successful cruise off the Irish coast had knocked the rough crew into fighting shape; the men had confidence in their captain, and the captain confidence in his men.

Cassard, therefore, was nothing loath to accept the



Had knocked the rough crew into fighting shape,



proffered combat; but he determined to fight the battle on his own ground. His three 3-pounders were of small use against the fourteen 9-pounders which his adversary was now bringing to bear on him, and he saw that if he allowed the fight to degenerate into a mere artillery duel, he would be sunk before being able to make even a show of force.

Success lay in his being able to board the enemy at once, and Cassard quickly explained his plan of action to the men.

As the Dutchman was overhauling him hand-over-hand, and threatening to dismast him by the accurate fire of his bow-chasers, he brailled up his courses, squared his mainyard, and allowed the enemy's vessel to range up alongside, then putting down his helm, he threw the *Saint William* into the fore-chains of the Dutchman, and followed by the majority of his crew dashed on board. A sanguinary hand-to-hand fight ensued, the Dutchmen, taken by surprise at the manœuvre of the little vessel which they looked upon as virtually their own, were little prepared for the sudden irruption of sixty desperadoes over their bulwarks, or for the terrible discharge of chain-shot with which Cassard's three guns swept their crowded decks the moment before his men sprung on board.

The confusion on the Dutchman's decks was intensified by the fury with which Cassard's men fought. They neither sought nor gave quarter, but forming up in one dense mass under the break of the Dutch ship's lofty forecastle, they drove the enemy step by step aft. Cassard was a man of more than ordinary coolness in situations of danger, and prior to boarding the enemy, he had told off a brave Malouine, named Guillois, for the

task of working one of the Dutch ship's guns on her own crew.

No sooner were the Frenchmen on the deck of the Dutchman than Guillois and some half-dozen of his Breton messmates made for one of the upper-deck guns, and running it inboard slewed it round to sweep the decks from stem to stern; at a given signal the Corsair crew opened out and Guillois, having loaded the gun to the muzzle with pistol-bullets, chain-links, and scraps of old iron, discharged it at this short range into the disorganized mass crowding the after-part of the ship.

Ere the noise of the discharge had died away, Cassard and his men sword and pike in hand were amongst the discomfited Dutchmen, whilst Guillois, calm as ever, was reloading the gun for a fresh discharge.

Once more above the din of the combat was heard the guttural tones of the Breton gunner, "*Gare à vous, mes gars,*" once more, as the Frenchmen dashed to the bulwarks, the gun belched forth its leaden hail on the terror-stricken Hollanders.

This second round decided the day. Faint and bleeding from three severe wounds, the Dutch captain pushed his way through the throng and tendered his sword to Cassard, and amidst loud shouting from those on deck, Guillois, to whom most of the honours of the day were due, climbed the main-rigging and tore down the States-General tricolour which had been nailed to the main-mast-head.

On the 24th of April, Cassard re-entered Brest, whilst following in his wake, under the command of the gallant Guillois, was the Dutch corvette *Catherine*, of fourteen guns. From her mast-head flew the white flag of France, whilst beneath it, with its fly whipped to a backstay, hung drooping the tricolour of Holland.

The fight had been a severe one, and that the Dutch had borne themselves well during the fray was evident. Of their own crew of 113 men, thirty-seven were hove overboard dead, and fifty-one wounded prisoners were carried into the hospitals of Brest. Cassard's crew too had suffered heavily; sixteen had been killed and twenty-three wounded, ere the intrepid Guillois had hauled down the enemy's flag.

The *Saint William* stayed in Brest for one short week, just long enough for Cassard to transfer four of the long 9-pounders of the *Catherine* to his own batteries and to make good the casualties amongst his crew. In this he had no difficulty. A successful Corsair had always the pick of the labor-market on the coast of Brittany, and when on the 2nd of May the *Saint William* stood out of the harbour on a fresh cruise, Cassard felt that with his new crew of eighty picked men and his fine long-range heavy Dutch cannon, he was a match for most craft he might happen to come across.

Once more steering for the south coast of Ireland, Cassard again played the rôle of an English trader. The majority of his men were kept between decks and his ports kept constantly closed, so that his heavy crew and powerful armament should not betray the real nature of his craft. This cruise was marked with much the same good fortune as had attended the voyage in the early spring. Two vessels, the *Fort Dreck*, a Dutchman bound from the West Indies to the Scheldt, and the *Couronnement*, a French-built craft sailing under English colors, were captured without resistance and ransomed for the considerable sum of 1,250*l*.

Then, fearing he might fall into the power of English cruisers, he stood out to sea, and sighting another St. Malo Corsair, the *Saint Denis*, he sailed in her com-

pany for some weeks. Cruising off the coast of Scotland, the *Saint William* and *Saint Denis* took eight prizes, which were ransomed for the sum of 1600*l.*; but heavy weather coming on, the two privateers determined to get an offing, and in the gales that ensued they parted company.

On the weather moderating, Cassard once more stood to the eastward, and was fortunate enough, on the 17th of June, to capture a Belfast collier named the *William*, and in the following week three grain ships, the *James*, the *Livonia*, and the *Elizabeth*, all surrendered without firing a shot.

In opposition to the express orders of the Minister of Marine on the question of prizes, Cassard made no attempt to work these vessels into a French port; but, in accordance with the rule he had prescribed for himself, admitted each and all to ransom, taking their captains as prisoners to ensure payment of the bills drawn for the purchase of their freedom.

There is much to be said in favor of this plan of ransom followed by Cassard, Jean Bart, and other well-known Corsairs. By retaining possession of all prizes, and working them into a friendly port, it was necessary to weaken the Corsair's own complement by a heavy prize-crew, and furthermore it was unavoidable that the Corsair's decks should be encumbered by crowds of prisoners from the captured ships. It happened more than once that the Corsair thus hampered with sick and wounded men, and deprived of half her crew, was captured on her homeward voyage by a vessel of inferior force. Still more often did it happen that the prizes manned only by a few seamen fell into the hands of an enemy's cruisers. Thus the fruit of the original victory was lost.

By ransoming the captured ship, the Corsair was free to resume her cruising with crew unweakened, and the prize now released still remained a possible prize on some subsequent occasion.

With bills to the amount of 7000*l.* in his pockets, Cassard might well be satisfied with the result of this summer's campaign, and on the 25th of June, his provisions and water running low, he willingly fell in with the wishes of his officers and bore up for France, entering St. Malo on the 2nd of July, 1706.

The good people of Nantes now began to see some worth in the hero they had so long spurned, and no sooner had Cassard paid off the *Saint William* than he was offered the command of a fast sailor just launched in his natal port, the *Duchess Anne*. This little craft, named after Bretagne's most popular ruler, was a smart little barque of 150 tons, mounting sixteen guns, and carrying a crew of 104 men. Details of his cruises of the next two years are wanting; but from the records to be found in the Admiralty Archives at St. Malo, it would appear that thirteen English vessels of various size were sold in that port by the Intendant of the Marine, for the account of the Corsair Cassard, and that these thirteen vessels produced a total sum of 37,000*l.* One-tenth of this sum, as I have already explained, went to the State, the remainder was divided between the merchants taking the risk of the venture, and the officers and crew of the capturing ship.

Whether Cassard had ransomed any other vessels, or whether the thirteen ships sold in St. Malo gave him opportunity for any further display of personal bravery, we have no means of knowing. It would, however, seem evident that Cassard, like Jean Bart, had been the recipient of official remonstrances on his custom

of admitting all his prizes to ransom, and that in consequence of these remonstrances, he had determined to bring the majority of these prizes, at any rate, to France for sale.

It is also clear from a study of the Admiralty Archives at St. Malo, that Cassard was now looked upon as one of the leading Corsairs on the coast of Brittany; that he no longer sailed with crews, the refuse of St. Malo docks, but that he commanded a little squadron of three small vessels which always sailed in company, acted under his orders, and that by detaching one of his consorts as escort to any prizes he might wish to send home, he was enabled to keep the sea for longer periods than would have been possible had he been merely in command of his own ship.

His fame, too, had spread beyond the shores of Brittany, for we next hear of him, in 1709, as being entrusted by some merchants of Marseilles with the task of convoying from Bizerta a fleet of six-and-twenty vessels laden with grain.

Long years of drought and of war and of persistent blockade on the part of the English had reduced France to scarcity—to within a measurable distance of famine. Although a Breton, Cassard's fame had reached the Mediterranean, and the remembrance of his gallant deeds at the bombardment of Carthagenia induced the merchants of Marseilles to turn to him for help in their distress. Cassard now was a man of means, his numerous rich prizes had placed a considerable fortune at his disposal, and the speculative merchants of Marseilles were anxious to find some person who should put money into a venture which they intended should bring them no loss, and might bring them considerable gain.

Cassard, a simple sailor, was little competent to deal

with these unscrupulous Southerners, and never doubting their *bona fides* he fitted out at his own expense two king's ships, the *Eclatant* and *Sérieux*, placed at his disposal by Ponchartrain, and at once worked his way round from Brest to Marseilles, then proceeding to Bizerta he assumed command of the convoy.

The news of his intentions had reached England, and the admiral commanding the English fleet in the Mediterranean was ordered to watch the Tunisian ports, and prevent Cassard's return to France.

The Bey of Tunis at this period enjoyed a reputation which any western monarch might have envied. Unscrupulous, cruel, and tryannical, he treated all Christian merchants as slaves; even the consuls of the western powers were subjected to treatment which ought to have provoked retaliatory measures on their part, and have bound Christian nations together to destroy the piratical nest which, strong only in its insolence, exacted observances from the most powerful States which were degrading and humiliating in the extreme. His Corsairs held almost undisputed sway over the Mediterranean, and every Christian sovereign paid him tribute.

So long as he was within Tunisian waters Cassard felt sure no English fleet would dare molest him. For England, which even then claimed the title of Mistress of the Seas, still lowered her flag in Tunisian waters.

But he knew also that his passage from Bizerta to Marseilles would never be accomplished without risk. He determined, therefore, to resort to stratagem, and on the occasion of a strong westerly gale he directed a part of the convoy to weigh anchor, and, under the charge of the *Eclatant*, make all sail to Malta, there to await further orders. The English were unprepared for

this *ruse*; their ships were lying at anchor, and taking advantage of the heavy northerly gale, which the admiral knew was unfavourable enough for Cassard's designs, he had taken the opportunity of giving his men liberty ashore.

On seeing the French convoy stand out to the westward, the English commander hoisted the signal of recall for his men, and ordered one of his smartest frigates to start in immediate pursuit. But night was falling as the French convoy gained the offing, and Cassard, cutting his own cables, stood after the English frigate to prevent her gaining wind of the movements of his fleet.

A sharp running fight at once commenced between the *Sérieux* and the English frigate, in which the former, over-weighted, suffered heavily; Cassard, however, succeeded in carrying out his designs. Before night fell he contrived to signal to the *Eclatant* to haul her wind, and to make the best of her way with the convoy to Marseilles, whilst he would keep the English squadron in play.

It was a perilous game, and one in which Cassard narrowly escaped capture. One by one the English vessels, slipping their cables, worked their way out of Bizerta, and standing on to the noise of the distant firing, gradually overhauled the *Sérieux*; but Cassard was not to be taken easily, the convoy he felt was safe, and he too might now seek his own safety in flight; therefore, running under the stern of an English ship which lay between him and the shore, he bore up for the nearest port, and was fortunate enough to reach Porta Farinà, with over five feet of water in his hold.

The Tunisian pirates showed Cassard every attention, and placed all their government stores at his dis-

position; so availing himself of their hospitality, he careened his badly-damaged vessel and determined to give her a thorough overhaul. It was some weeks before the *Sérieux* was in a fit state to take the sea, and when she was ready, Cassard had to act with caution to avoid capture at the hands of the English frigate which still watched his actions. At last evading the cruiser, he succeeded in beating out of harbour and shaping his course to Marseilles.

In standing across the Gulf of Genoa he was fortunate enough to fall in with two English merchantmen, the one laden with oil and fruit from the Levant, and the other with wheat from Syracuse. Finding themselves vastly inferior in force to the French Corsair, these two craft hauled down their flags without attempting any resistance, and Cassard, placing prize-crews on board, bore up in their company for Marseilles, which he reached in safety without further molestation.

On reaching Marseilles he found that the convoy had arrived without mishap, but that the unscrupulous merchants, taking advantage of a clause in the agreement, refused to carry out their pecuniary obligations because, forsooth, Cassard had not personally escorted the grain-ships to Marseilles!

Disgusted with their meanness, Cassard brought an action against them, but the members of the Marseilles *Tribunal civile* were too closely allied to the Marseilles merchants to give an honest verdict in favour of the Breton Corsair, and Cassard lost his cause. Convinced of the justice of his case, the brave sailor appealed to the higher court at Aix, but here again hidden influences were brought to bear on the judges, and the decision of the Marseilles court was upheld.

This unfortunate *contretemps* rankled deeply in

Cassard's mind. He had invested a very considerable sum in fitting out the *Eclatant* and *Sérieux*, and the heavy damage sustained by the latter vessel in her engagement with the English squadron—an engagement undertaken solely with the view of ensuring the safety of the Marseilles convoy—had also necessitated a large outlay. The legal expenses attendant on his appeals to the tribunals at Marseilles and Aix had likewise been heavy, and though a large proportion of the sum realized by the sale of the two English prizes had fallen to Cassard's share, the intrepid sailor had the mortification of feeling that he had been mulct in the sum of 10,000*l.* for the performance of a duty which placed Marseilles beyond the reach of famine, and which had filled the pockets of the greedy speculators of that city.

Still, though brought within a measurable distance of ruin, Cassard was not the man to sit down and mourn over his misfortunes. He had still friends in Brittany who believed in his good star, and in truth the good folk of Marseilles were not averse to trusting him with another expedition; but Cassard was in no way anxious to place his services at the disposal of a city that had shown him so much ingratitude, and though in the following year he was offered the command of the Smyrna fleet, he indignantly rejected the proposal.

Early in June, 1710, the fleet set sail; it consisted of eighty-four merchant-vessels destined for the conveyance of grain from Asia Minor to France, and of six ships of war as escort. These were the *Téméraire*, 60, *Toulouse*, 60, *Etendard*, 50, *Fleurion*, 50, *Hirondelle*, 36, and *Vestale*, 36, the whole being under the command of a M. de Feuquières. The convoy reached Smyrna in safety, and in the month of October commenced the return voyage, but on nearing the coast of Sicily, M. de

Feuquières learnt from a passing vessel that a strong English squadron was cruising in the Gulf of Genoa for the express purpose of preventing his entry to Marseilles.

As his vessels of war were heavily laden with wheat, and in no condition to manœuvre against a well-equipped, fast-sailing English fleet, M. de Feuquières determined on taking refuge in the harbour of Syracuse and sending despatches to France demanding relief.

The non-arrival of the Smyrna fleet caused the greatest consternation in Marseilles. It was known that the English squadron was cruising in the Gulf of Genoa, and it was also known that the convoy had long since left Smyrna. Its capture by the English meant starvation to thousands in the South of France, and financial ruin to the very merchants whose perfidy had caused the ruin of the brave Cassard of France. The doubts and fears of the Marseillais were set at rest by the arrival of M. Lambert in the *Toulouse*, 60, at Toulon bringing intelligence that the convoy had reached Syracuse in safety, and was waiting additional escort before venturing to cross the Gulf.

The merchants of Marseilles in their difficulty appealed to Cassard; but Cassard, mindful of their past ingratitude, refused to listen to their overtures. In their despair—for famine was staring them in the face—they turned to the Minister of Marine, and sufficient influence having been brought to bear on Pontchartrain, M. d'Aligré de Saint Lie, the Intendant of Marine at Toulon, was instructed to fit out all available ships of war in his port, and place them under the command of Cassard for the relief of the blockaded fleet. Further despatches had been received from M. de Feuquières, and it was now known that the English fleet, learning

the movements of the French convoy, had quitted the Gulf of Genoa, and was closely watching the port of Syracuse.

On receiving his orders from the Minister of Marine, Cassard at once proceeded to Toulon, and on the 8th of November set sail for Syracuse at the head of a well-found little squadron consisting of the *Parfait*, 70, flying his own flag, the *Toulouse*, 60, Captain De Lambert, *Sérieux*, 60, M. de l'Aigle, the *Phœnix*, 56, M. du Haies.

Favoured with a strong westerly breeze, Cassard reached Syracuse on the evening of the following day, and then found that the blockading squadron had borne up for Port Mahon, leaving but two ships, the *Pembroke*, 64, and *Falcon*, 36, to watch the French convoy. Knowing that the English had merely proceeded to Port Mahon for stores and water, Cassard determined to profit by their absence, and to at once attack the ships watching the port. He accordingly ordered De Feuquières to weigh anchor and proceed with the convoy to Marseilles, whilst he with the *Parfait*, 70, *Sérieux*, 60, and *Phœnix*, 56, bore down on the two English frigates.

Although outnumbered and overmatched, Rumfry, the captain of the *Pembroke*, did his utmost to delay the escape of the French convoy; but he had no means of sending information to his admiral, and all he could do was to endeavour to sink some of the enemy's ships and avoid capture himself. He soon found, however, that the new commander of the French squadron was a very different man to De Feuquières, a man anxious to provoke rather than to avoid a combat, one capable of handing a vessel with coolness and judgment, and that every effort would be needed to save himself from

capture. All thought, therefore, of harming the French convoy must be put on one side.

Cassard on his part was determined to take or to sink the English vessels; he felt that the convoy was now secure from all chance of capture, and that he might act at his leisure with the two craft before him.

He directed M. de l'Aigle and M. de Haies with the *Sérieux* and *Phœnix* to engage the *Pembroke*, whilst he in the *Parfait* attacked the little *Falcon*. The unequal combat was not of long duration, though the defence of the *Falcon* was marked by much determination and much gallantry.

Unable to escape from her more powerful and swifter-sailing adversary, the little frigate determined to sell herself as dearly as possible, and when the *Parfait* ranged alongside, and succeeded in lashing her bowsprit to the fore-chains of the *Falcon*, the English captain, Constable, forestalled Cassard's intention by pouring over one hundred well-armed boarders on the *Parfait's* decks. But this attempt to carry Cassard's ship was quickly repulsed; not, however, without serious loss, and when Cassard attempted to throw his own boarders on to the Englishman he found that the grappling-irons had been cast loose, and the *Falcon*, filling, was standing away from him.

The heavy metal of the *Parfait* soon put an end to the *Falcon's* flight, and once more Cassard grappled to the Englishman's rigging, endeavoring to carry the frigate by boarding. This second attempt was also driven back; but the crew of the *Falcon* had made their last effort. Constable and seventeen of his men had been left dead on the *Parfait's* decks in their first gallant attempt to carry the Frenchman, and in beating off Cas-

sard's assaults, forty-three killed had been added to the total.

Numbers now began to tell, and though the crew of the *Parfait* was also much weakened, she was able to bring into action three men to every one the *Falcon* could show. At last, seeing two-thirds of his crew hors-de-combat, and seeing also that the *Pembroke* was too hard pressed to offer him any assistance, the First Lieutenant of the *Falcon* hauled down his colors.

Placing a prize-crew on board, with orders to its commander to bear up after De Feuquières' convoy, Cassard stood on to aid the *Sérieux* and *Phœnix*, which were merely indulging in a cannonade with the *Pembroke*.

On noticing the approach of the *Parfait*, the captain of the English two-decker at once bore down on the newcomer, with the intention of throwing his boarders on her. In manœuvring to avoid the shock of collision, Cassard laid himself open to a raking fire from the broadside of the *Pembroke*, which, tearing through his stern galleries, killed over thirty men on his lower deck.

Broadsides now were exchanged at close quarters, yard-arm to yard-arm, muzzle to muzzle: the two ships fought on, but the *Pembroke* was doomed to capture.

The *Sérieux*, ranging up on her other quarter, exposed her to a raking fire as she took up her position, and in a few moments her main top-mast and her mizzen went by the board, lumbering her decks with their wreckage and disabling many men in their fall. After half an hour of this unequal combat the *Pembroke* struck her colors, and on taking possession of her, Cassard found that her captain, the gallant Rumfry, and seventy-four men were dead, and six officers and 134 men lay wounded, out of a total of 320 men.

On the 15th of November, Cassard entered Toulon with the two prizes and the convoy of M. de Feuquières. A perfect ovation awaited him, but the merchants of Marseilles were none the less unwilling to fulfil their agreement of the preceding year, and though the brave Nantais had rescued a convoy worth eight million livres tournois, which they had almost given up for lost, the Marseillais refused to listen to his just claim for the paltry 10,000*l.* he had spent in equipping the *Éclatant* and *Sérieux* for their aid in 1709.

Although Cassard had brought the convoy in safety to Toulon, he still felt his task but partly accomplished. Six English ships of war lay in Port Mahon harbour, and many English merchantmen were peacefully cruising in the Mediterranean Sea. Some vessels richly freighted were, he knew, *en route* between Smyrna and Gibraltar, and he determined to try and capture them.

With the permission of M. Aligré de St. Lie, the Intendant of Marine at Toulon, he left that port, as soon as he had made good his defects, with the *Parfait*, 70, and *Sérieux*, 60, and shaped his course for Smyrna. Off Cagliari he fell in with and captured a small Tunisian Corsair, which he sunk, and the next day he sighted a convoy of ten English merchant-ships under the escort of a small frigate mounting twenty-four guns. The frigate, exercising a wise discretion, made no attempt at defence, and within ten days of his leaving Toulon, Cassard re-entered that harbour with eleven English ships following in his wake.

On his arrival at Toulon, early in 1711, Cassard learnt that Louis XIV. had been pleased to promote him to the rank of Captain of Frigate, and had nominated him to the command of the military works about to be constructed at Toulon.

It seems strange that a Corsair bred in the fore-castle of a Newfoundland fishing craft should be appointed to an important engineering command, but it appears that Cassard had turned his attention to matters other than mere privateering, and had been employed at St. Malo in drawing up plans for the defence of the place. If we may believe the accounts of his biographer, Richer, Louis XIV. was well satisfied with Cassard's industry and intelligence. New detached works were thrown up on all the commanding sites in the neighbourhood of Toulon, and several fresh ravelins constructed in advance of the old fortifications.

Though employed in the king's service and wearing the king's uniform, Cassard sighed for the freedom of the Corsair life; he was wearied of the inaction ashore, disgusted with the injustice shown him, and longed for active employment in order to purge his mind of the anger he nourished against the merchants of Marseilles. Cassard's was a hard calling, and a hard calling produces a hard nature. Defeated in his actions at the courts of Marseilles and of Aix, he ventured to lay his case before the king; but the merchants of Marseilles possessed golden means of controverting even this appeal, and Cassard had the mortification of seeing all his efforts to wrest from these robbers his well-earned savings treated with scorn and contumely.

Finding himself worsted at every turn, Cassard applied to his friends of St. Malo and Nantes for aid, and laid before them a plan for the capture of the Portuguese islands of Cape de Verde. The immense profit derived by those who had shared in the fitting out of De Pointis' expedition to Carthagera, fired the imagination of the usually phlegmatic Bretons, and knowing that much of the success at Carthagera was due to the

boldness and sagacity of Cassard, it was not long before the brave Nantais was able to submit his plan to Pontchartrain. Backed as it was by the names of some of the wealthiest merchants in Brittany and Provence, the minister welcomed it with warmth, and at once placed the resources of the dockyard at Toulon at Cassard's disposal.

Destitute of Court influence, Cassard was unable to collect such a formidable flotilla as that which De Pointis had led forth to Carthagera, nor was he able to interest Pontchartrain so sufficiently in the undertaking as to induce the minister to place at his disposal skilled officers of the scientific forces. Cassard was one of the people, admitted, it is true, into the blue-blooded ranks of the king's navy, but still not to be confounded with such men as De Pointis, whose merit consisted in his quarterings, and whose success was due to the energy, skill, and gallantry of his subordinates; consequently Cassard was forced to content himself with such men as might be attracted to his flag by the knowledge of his past services—these, fortunately, were neither few in number, nor were they destitute of experience and valor.

Early in 1712, Cassard found himself ready for sea; his squadron comprised the *Neptune*, 70, *Téméraire*, 64, *Rubis*, 64, *Parfait*, 64, *Médusa*, 40, *Prince de Frise*, 36, and *D'Aligré*, 36, with two smaller craft, the *Anne* and the *Marie*.

In addition to the crews of these ships, numbering over 3,000 men, Cassard had succeeded in enlisting some 1,200 soldiers, whom he intended to use whenever shore operations became necessary. The scenes he had witnessed at Carthagera had convinced him that the discipline of sailors when employed ashore is apt to

become slack, and that it is far more difficult to utilize landing-parties hastily made up from the crews of men-of-war than bodies of troops accustomed to fight and to manœuvre on dry ground.

On the 12th of May of the same year Cassard arrived off St. Jago, the largest of the Cape de Verde islands, and landed his troops, which he formed up into four weak battalions to the southward of the town. He himself, with his fleet, stood on to the northward, and when from signals he perceived that M. de Forgues, whom he had placed in command of the shore party, had reached the heights dominating Port Praya, he stood inshore and summoned the governor to surrender.

The garrison was a strong one, the place well fortified, and the walls were mounted with over 200 pieces of ordnance; but the troops, though numerous, were ill-disciplined, and mainly composed of negroes recruited from the coasts of Africa; to Cassard's surprise, the place surrendered at the first summons. :

Placing the Portuguese officers on one of his own ships, Cassard landed and at once took steps for marching on Riviera Grande, the then capital of the island. The advance guard consisted of 500 soldiers under M. de Forgues, the main body, of 1200 sailors under Cassard, whilst the rear was made up of 200 men under M. de la Garde. The safety of Port Praya was assured by the fleet, and a detachment of 300 troops under M. de Pienne.

The governor of Riviera Grande showed himself as averse to fighting as his colleague at Port Praya, and on receipt of Cassard's summons to surrender, he requested that a senior officer might be sent into the city to arrange the terms of the capitulation. At the same time he, with what Cassard stigmatized as duplicity,

but what others might style prudent forethought, warned the bishop and clergy to remove all church plate and valuables to a place of security. According to the terms of the surrender the governor was to hand over to Cassard, within three days, the sum of 350,000*l.* in specie in order to save the town from pillage and destruction; but, when once the treaty was signed and the valiant governor safe in the mountains, he troubled himself little about the terms arranged on, and, having saved his own effects whilst the treaty was being discussed, cared little what happened to the property of others.

Cassard, furious at his duplicity, instituted an organized pillage; he blew up the fortifications, destroyed the public buildings, carried on board his own ships the church bells, all the cannon and munition of war, and over 20,000,000 francs' worth of property.

This done, he handed the city over to a three days' plunder, and then having taken on board 400 negro soldiers who volunteered to serve under him, and having seized two large Portuguese ships lying in Port Praya harbour, he made sail across the Atlantic, and anchored safely under the shelter of the French batteries in Martinique.

Elated at his success with the Portuguese, Cassard determined to seek foemen more worthy of his steel, and at once set about organizing an expedition against the British settlements in the West Indies. Armed with the profits of the pillage of the Cape de Verdes, Cassard purchased fresh vessels in Martinique, and manned them with the brave filibusters of St. Domingo.

In July, 1712, he made a descent on the British island of Montserrat and ravaged it, carrying off not only immense quantities of loot, but also five large ships which,

unfortunately, were lying in the harbour unguarded by any ship-of-war. From Montserrat, Cassard sailed to Antigua, which was likewise unable to make any defence, and which in the same way was subjected to eight days' pillage. Freighted with the rich booty of these two islands, Cassard once more bore up for Martinique to caulk and repair his vessels, and make a preliminary distribution of his spoils, in order to calm the rising murmurings of the undisciplined filibusters of St. Domingo.

Having satisfied the malcontents, Cassard determined on attacking the Dutch colony of Surinam. This was a formidable undertaking, as Surinam was not merely well-garrisoned, but had fortifications mounting over 30 guns.

Still Cassard, nothing daunted, determined on the attempt, and in October his fleet appeared at the mouth of the Surinam river. The Dutch were well prepared for him, and made a most gallant defence. But all was in vain, for Cassard, assuming the direction of the land operations himself, established some batteries on shore which in conjunction with the fire of the fleet rendered the town untenable. Seeing himself reduced to the last extremity, and the civil population of the town becoming rebellious under the straits to which they were reduced, the governor proposed a capitulation, and though the terms were hard, he was compelled, owing to the representations of the merchant residents, to agree to them. Fifteen thousand barrels of sugar and 300,000*l.* in specie was the price paid to save Surinam from French pillage!

Whilst lying off Surinam waiting for the embarkation of the sugar, Cassard despatched two of his subordinates to seize Berbice and Essequibo. These were suc-

cessfully captured, and ransomed for a further sum of a quarter of a million sterling.

From Surinam Cassard proceeded to St. Eustace, which surrendered without resistance; and having extracted from the governor a sufficient ransom, the French fleet stood on to Curaçao, arriving off the island on the 16th of February, 1713. But heavy weather had been experienced on the voyage from Surinam, and the *Neptune*, one of the largest vessels in Cassard's command, had been driven ashore and totally wrecked. Fortunately but few lives were lost, and the rescued crew having been distributed amongst the other ships of the squadron the actual fighting strength of the expedition was not much impaired.

At this period Curaçao was the most important of all the Dutch possessions in South America; it had been in their possession just eighty years, and was looked upon as one of their richest colonies.

Every effort had been made to render it impregnable to the attacks of the jealous enemies of Holland, to whom, of course, its wealth pointed it out as a tempting prize. Its commerce consisted chiefly of sugar, wool, skins, and spirits, and besides its Dutch population, a number of wealthy Jews had settled on the island, who carried on a lucrative trade with the neighbouring coasts. Not merely was the capital of the island defended by admirably constructed fortifications on its sea-front, but a series of works surrounded it on the shore side, which seemed to forbid all hope of successful attack in any direction.

Cassard was well aware of the difficulties of his enterprise, but he considered that a victorious result would more than repay him for the risk to be run, and though he was aware that a very opposite feeling existed

amongst his subordinate commanders, he determined on carrying out his project at all hazards.

On arriving off the port, Cassard sent a boat ashore to the governor, demanding the surrender of the island. To this, of course, a contemptuous answer was returned, and though the boat itself was not fired on, yet when Cassard stood in-shore on the *Parfait* to reconnoitre the works, he was greeted with such a well-directed and heavy fire from the forts, that he saw all hope of attack from the sea-front must be abandoned.

Like many a commander before and since, Cassard, whilst always acting on his own responsibility, and generally in accordance with his own judgment, would often collect around him his senior officers, in order to learn their views, and often to obtain from them practical suggestions as to the ensuing operations. On this occasion he once more followed his usual plan, and signalling for the captains of all ships-of-war, the commanders of the troops, and the leaders of the filibustering battalions, to come on board his ship, he assembled a council of war.

There the mass of opinion was against attack. It was pointed out to Cassard that the Dutch garrison was more numerous than his own, and was at least equally well-disciplined, that the guns mounted on the ramparts of the town were of heavier metal than those on his own ships, that the strong currents sweeping round the island rendered landing difficult, and that to undertake a descent in the face of the Dutch troops was to court defeat.

M. de Sabran, one of the officers of the land forces and the commander of the filibusters, opposed these sentiments, and strongly supported Cassard's views, which were in favor of an immediate attack. As often

happens, the doubting many were won over by the hot-headed few; and ere the council broke up it had been unanimously determined to attempt a landing on the morrow, and the details of the expedition had been also arranged.

It was decided that the fleet should divide into two squadrons, in order to induce the Dutch to separate their forces; these could be discerned from the French ships, drawn up on the heights overlooking the town, ready to move to any spot where a landing might be attempted. One portion of the fleet, with the mass of the troops under M. de Sabran, stood to the westward, with orders to change their direction during the night, and rendezvous before dawn at the Bay of St. Croix, some fifteen miles from the port of Curaçao. Cassard with the rest of the fleet, stood in to the main harbour, and opened a steady fire upon the works. To this fire an accurate response was immediately returned, and the Dutch troops, as if divining that Cassard's bombardment was but a feint to draw off attention from the main attack, at once moved off along the coast to the westward, to oppose the anticipated descent from the other squadron.

As night fell and darkness enshrouded his movements, Cassard still kept up his fire, and still kept the lights of his ships-of-war burning to deceive the Dutch as to his real intentions; but under cover of the fire, he had silently transferred the greater portion of his crews and all the troops on board his squadron to the small coasting-craft in attendance on the fleet, and quietly drifted down with the current towards St. Croix.

There, in the short hours of a tropical winter night, he succeeded in throwing ashore some 1100 men, and anxiously awaited the arrival of M. de Sabran with

the 2000 men under his command. The landing was not accomplished without difficulty, and fortunate it was that it was unopposed; the current ran strong and swift round the coast, which was studded with rocks and reefs, rendering the approach dangerous in the extreme. In the darkness the true perils of the undertaking were fortunately not visible; had they been, it is doubtful if they would have had much effect on Cassard and his brave followers, who were too keenly alive to the prize within their reach to think much of the difficulties to be encountered ere it was won.

Cassard's first act—and this was accomplished ere morn broke—was to throw up a rough work close to the shore, as a cover for his landing party; in this he placed some light guns landed from the coasting-craft in his squadron, and manned it with 500 soldiers under one of his most trusted officers.

As the sun rose, anxious glances were cast seaward for signs of M. de Sabran's squadron, and to Cassard's intense dismay this was seen some miles to leeward endeavouring to beat up against wind and tide to the place of rendezvous, which in the darkness of the night it had passed by. To add to Cassard's perplexity, a powerful work was also visible about a mile from the landing-place, and it was abundantly evident that the strength of his force had been accurately gauged, and that the Dutch commandant was making preparations to move forward and drive him into the sea, ere reinforcements could arrive.

The Corsairs of old were not wont to ponder long over their plans of action; "*l'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace*" was their motto, and by it many an apparently lost game had been won. Delay in this case would be fatal. Some hours must elapse ere De Sabran could

reach St. Croix, and long before his own reinforcements could arrive the garrison of Curaçao would have strengthened the hands of the Dutch commandant of the fort in front of him.

It was necessary then to carry it at once, and Cassard, with that promptitude which characterized the actions of men of his calling, despatched a boat to the squadron lying off St. Croix, from which his own men had been landed, directing them to land every available man to hold the field-work he had thrown up, and then with the 1100 soldiers at his command he moved against the Dutch fort.

Cassard's own version of the affair is simple enough: he says that two of his assaults were repulsed, and that in the third, which was successful, he was wounded by a musket-bullet in the foot, which prevented his taking any part in the further operations of the day, but that he directed M. de Hesquinet to pursue the enemy to a position some four miles nearer Curaçao, where another work existed. This also was carried in gallant style, and the French now satisfied themselves with strengthening the defences of the two captured forts, in order to guard against counter-attacks. But no counter-attacks came.

For some inscrutable reason—inscrutable as it appeared to Cassard—the governor of Curaçao made no attempt to retake the lost forts, and it was not until the capital of the island had been captured that Cassard learnt the real reason for this inexplicable conduct.

It then transpired that the governor, hearing of the extreme weakness of the force landed at St. Croix, never believed that Cassard was there; he still thought the descent at that spot was a mere feint to draw away the mass of his troops from the capital on which the

real attack would be made. Thus M. de Hesquinet was enabled on the following night to push on still nearer to Curaçao, and on De Sabran's landing, a night march was made on the very capital itself, and two works, Fort St. Michel and Fort Pescadera, seized by storm before the astonished governor could afford them any aid.

These two forts were built on a hill commanding the southern approach to the town, and when Cassard, who was now on the *Parfait* lying off the port, saw the white flag of France flying over their ramparts he sent in a *parlementaire* to the governor, threatening to bombard the town by land and sea if it did not surrender at discretion. But the Dutch governor refused to listen to such terms, and at once took steps for the recapture of the nearer works.

De Sabran was ready for him, and every effort to dislodge the French being found useless, the governor in his turn sent off an officer to Cassard's ship to discuss terms. Finally it was arranged that on 600,000 Louis d'or or their value in current specie being handed over to the French commander, Curaçao would be left in peace.

The wealthy Dutch merchants could scarcely credit the fact that Cassard, the grasping Corsair, would be satisfied with such a sum, and fearing that he might change his mind and name some ransom more in keeping with the vast sums received at Surinam and Antigua, they hastened to pay over their ingots to the governor, and so rid themselves of their unpleasant visitors. On the third day the ransom-money was ready, and on the 28th of February De Sabran handed over Forts Michel and Pescadera to the Dutch, marched down to

the beach, and embarked his men. On the following morning Cassard set sail for Martinique.

There a cruel blow awaited him. His continued successes in the West Indies had aroused the jealousy of the blue-blooded sailors of Versailles; and Pontchartrain, listening to unfounded tales, despatched another officer, an aristocrat endowed with many quarterings, to Martinique, with instructions to assume command of all the French ships in those waters, and with them return at once to France. The indignation of Cassard's subordinates was extreme, and the mortification of the brave Corsair was fully as deep as his worst wisher could have desired. He made no effort to appeal against the minister's orders, but merely asked a few days' delay in order to settle up the accounts of the filibusters and to rest his wounded limb, which in truth needed rest after the rough treatment it had received at Curaçao.

The delay was grudgingly granted, and was afterwards made an excuse for one of the charges against the Corsair. Having handed over to his gallant allies from St. Domingo their full share of the booty captured during the successful cruise, Cassard reported himself ready to sail, and the whole flotilla immediately weighed anchor, shaping a course for Brest.

The homeward voyage was characterized by an incident illustrating the indiscipline prevalent in the Corsair fleet. An English squadron being sighted, the French admiral signalled his ships to avoid action. Cassard, "spoiling for a fight," solicited permission to attack; this was peremptorily refused, whereupon Cassard, turning to his second in command, "My duty to my sovereign over-rides my duty to my admiral, and I take it that my real duty is to fight his Majesty's ene-

mies wherever I see them." He accordingly bore down on the enemy, signalling to his old associates to follow him. Night put an end to the engagement, which resulted in the capture of two small English craft by Cassard's squadron.

After this Cassard parted company with the admiral and made his way to Brest alone. On arrival there he was much gratified at learning that the king had been graciously pleased to promote him to the rank of *capitaine de vaisseau* and to bestow on him the Order of St. Louis.

But a reaction speedily set in. The irate admiral, indignant at the mutinous conduct of his subordinate, preferred charges against him, and Cassard was summoned to Versailles to justify his conduct. There his unpolished exterior and rough speech found but little favour; he had none of the self-assertion which carried Jean Bart with safety through the perilous intricacies of courtly conventionalities. On the contrary, he was shy, morose, diffident, yet obstinately perverse in preferring what he imagined to be his just claim.

Other enemies cropped up. It was asserted that, in distributing to the filibusters of St. Domingo their share of the buccaneering expedition to the West Indies, Cassard had retained for himself a large amount of valuable property, and the merchants interested in the repartition of the plunder induced the minister to waive Cassard's claim to any share in the final distribution.

In vain Cassard called on the officers who had served under him to testify to the falsehood of these charges; in vain did he apply for the settlement of the affair to be delayed until the arrival of witnesses from St. Domingo. The minister lent a willing ear to the false tales, the distribution of the vast sums realized by the

sale of the captured property was proceeded with; the Count of Toulouse as High Admiral of France, claimed his tenth, the merchants who furnished the expedition with its initiation funds took their half, the captains and crews divided the remainder, and Cassard—the life and soul of the enterprise, the head that planned, the hand that carried out every undertaking, the man ever foremost in danger, to whom alone success was due—was left penniless to beg his bread from those who had made thousands and thousands by his skill and gallantry.

But he was not absolutely penniless as yet. Some 60,000 francs, the proceeds of one of his earlier expeditions, had been settled on his unmarried sisters, and these good women furnished him from time to time with small sums to enable him to remain at Versailles in the hope of obtaining a reversal of the decree which left him a ruined man.

For years a shabbily-dressed seaman, decorated with the Star of St. Louis, walking with the aid of a stick, and bearing the marks of many wounds, was a conspicuous figure at all Court ceremonies, the spectre at every feast; but menial officials were always at hand to prevent his intruding on his sovereign or the ministers. In truth the Grand Monarch thought he had done enough for the Corsair, and the consciences of the ministers—if Louis's ministers had any consciences—dreaded the awakening that an interview with the hardly-used man would surely have caused.

Gradually the throng became accustomed to the sight of the neglected hero, and gradually it forgot his history, and forgot even his presence. It is related, however, that one day Duguay Trouin, in the very height of his fame, was attending some Court ceremonial,

when suddenly in the midst of a group of courtiers, he saw Cassard, bowed and bent, leaning against the niche of a doorway; and leaving the gay nobles, who did not shun the manly presence of the Malouine Corsair, Duguay rushed to Cassard, and shaking him warmly by the hand, remained for some time in earnest conversation, and on leaving him, pressed on the brave old hero, down whose cheeks coursed hot tears of gratitude, his well-filled purse.

"Who is the droll old man you spoke to," said the Marquis d'Harcourt.

"That man," replied Duguay Trouin, "is Jacques Cassard, Captain in his Majesty's Marine, and one time a Corsair of Nantes. He is the bravest and the best sailor the king possesses, and I would willingly exchange every action I have fought to be the hero of the paltriest fight won by such a man."

Duguay Trouin's advocacy was of no avail and Cassard sunk more and more into oblivion. At last, one day avoiding the attendants, he accosted Cardinal Fleury and implored that his claim against the Government for the West Indian, and against the merchants of Marseilles for the Tunisian expedition might be inquired into. Fleury rudely pushed the old man aside, and Cassard retorted with burning words and uplifted cane. A cardinal and a king's minister was not lightly to be bearded, and that night as Cassard lay in his humble lodging, he was arrested and conveyed to the fortress of Ham.

In that castle, rendered famous by the incarceration of many a more powerful prisoner, the brave old Corsair of Nantes was confined until his death in 1740.

Although Cassard never achieved personal popularity like Duguay Trouin and Jean Bart, there is no

doubt that he must rank as their equals. He was more than a mere Corsair, he was a successful leader of great expeditions, for surely the capture of the Cape de Verdes, of Antigua, Montserrat, Surinam, Essequibo, and Curaçao must rank with Duguay Trouin's brave exploit at Rio Janeiro—nay, should surpass it, for whilst the *Malouine* was unfortunate enough to lose the vessels bringing home the treasure from Rio, Cassard was fortunate enough to carry into Martinique treasure to the value of 7,000,000*l.* sterling.

That these figures are somewhat exaggerated every impartial person must allow, yet putting on one side the value—the money value of his exploits—the exploits themselves raise Cassard far above the level of the ordinary Corsair, above that even of the spirited naval commander, Jean Bart, and place him in the category of the Drakes and Blakes of England.

That such a man should have been reduced to penury and have died in a prison is a disgrace even to the age in which he lived. Cassard is no popular hero, nevertheless his career is one that deserved to be disentombed from the musty volumes of a past century.

The people of Nantes have done well in doing honor to one who was an honor to their city, and whose melancholy ending was one of the many shameful acts which stained the memory of the Grand Monarque.

CHAPTER IV

Duguay Trouin of St. Malo—1673-1736



THOSE who have faith in signs and tokens may well believe that Duguay Trouin was born under a lucky star. He was born on the 10th of June, 1673. Between the 7th and 21st June, the combined fleets of France and England inflicted a series of crushing defeats on the Dutch squadrons under Tromp and Ruyter; and the first sounds which struck the ears of the future Corsair were the bells of St. Malo ringing, and the guns of St. Malo firing in honour of a victory—one of the earliest ever gained by a squadron composed entirely of a French king's vessels.

The house in which Duguay Trouin was born, a quaint old wooden structure in the Rue Jean Chatillon, is still pointed out to visitors; though if no cicerone be at hand, it may readily be recognized by the little tablet on its walls bearing the words, "Ici est né Duguay Trouin."

Sprung from a race who had ever made their living by the sea, it is a matter of surprise that the lad should have been destined for another career; but the father's later enterprises as a privateer had not been crowned with success. An uncle was a French Consul at Malaga, and this uncle was a close friend of the Bishop of that see, who happened to be a brother of Philip IV., King

of Spain. Through this influence, clerical preferment was anticipated, and though the little René loved to play amongst the rotting boats behind the old arsenal, or to wander in the shipping-yards away up the banks of the Rance, and thought the smell of tar was sweeter than that of incense, he never dared to question his father's decision, and quietly acquiesced in the future carved out for him; so after an early education in the College of St. Malo, he was despatched to Rennes, there to complete his studies for the priesthood.

The vacations spent at home served more and more to draw the lad away from his intended calling. One by one his little playfellows were drafted off to sea—some to follow in the wake of the early Corsairs of Bretagne, others to endure still greater hardships and privations on the fishing-banks of Newfoundland—and René fretted out his soul at home. Well read and active both in mind and body, his spirit revolted at the thought of the future marked out for him, and on more than one occasion outbreaks of insubordination brought down on him severe and condign punishment. In 1688 his father died, and then occurred an episode rare indeed in the history of French youth.

A priest, wearied with young René's continued inattention, took up a ruler and struck the boy over the knuckles. In these days of "Liberté, égalité, fraternité," corporal punishment is absolutely forbidden in French schools. René, however, brooked no such treatment; before the priest had time to realize his intention, he seized the unfortunate cleric by the collar, and wrenching the ruler from his grasp, broke it over the tempting shaven pate. The consternation in the college was extreme: a reverend father assaulted by a candidate for the priesthood. Never was such an outrage heard of;

the lad was hurried off to a refractory cell, and his widowed mother hastily summoned.

Duguay scorned to ask pardon for his offence, and stoutly threatened to repeat it should a like indignity be offered him. To retain such a godless youth was impossible, so he, graceless and impenitent, was forthwith removed to Caen, where it was hoped severer discipline and closer attention to study might wean the youth from mundane matters. But the good priests at Caen relished not the lad whose sturdy frame and well-knit muscles showed full well that he was capable of repeating the experiment tried at Rennes, and few if any efforts were made to induce the young Malouine to conform to college rules.

He roamed the town at his own good will, and soon made friends outside the walls of the college, whose tastes were more congenial than those who dwelt within. From these he learnt much that was useful and some things perhaps wiser left unknown, he became an adept at sword-play, passionately fond of gambling, and more and more averse to the calling for which he was destined.

The injudicious liberality of his mother enabled him to follow pretty much his own inclinations in every respect, and we may judge of the precocity of the youth when we read that in his sixteenth year he succeeded in paying a visit to Paris and another to Rouen, when supposed to be studying religion at the College of Caen. It was clear that René Duguay Trouin was scarcely likely to justify the kind intervention of the Bishop of Malaga—his own inclinations pointed to the sea.

The sound of war was rife in France. Louis XIV. was standing at bay against all the great powers, and the French navy, Colbert's magnificent legacy, was now at the very zenith of its glory. There were men holding

high commands who had sprung from Corsair origin, and courtly smiles and courtly influence were not entirely reserved for those of noble birth. Men high in the land, deep in the king's counsel, did not hesitate to mix themselves up in expeditions by which money might be made, and in which no king's ship ventured to appear. Every port in France was interested in this style of naval warfare, but none had thrown themselves into it with more cordiality than the Corsair city of St. Malo.

In the year 1689 no fewer than seventy-eight craft of all rigs and all sizes from that port alone were employed in scouring the seas for the sole purpose of destroying the commerce of those nations at war with France.

Here was the opportunity for René Duguay Trouin, here he might find heads harder to break and more legitimately to be broken than that of the worthy *frère* of Rennes. His father was not without renown as a Corsair, and there were many captains sailing out of St. Malo who would gladly welcome on board their craft a son of Luc Trouin of la Barbinais, for they were well aware that the relatives of the lad were rich enough and willing enough to assist substantially in equipping a vessel for this lucrative, if dangerous trade.

Young Duguay Trouin knew well the life before him. The streets of St. Malo were full of men who plied the trade of Corsair; from his own father's lips he had heard many a tale of hard encounters, of dismasted craft, and shot-torn hulls, of prize and captor cast helpless on the perilous reefs which fringe the coasts of Brittany; and many a lad, scarce his own age, had sturdily played his minor part in scenes which our young hero pictured to himself only too vividly. Brought up midst compan-

ions like these, Duguay was not the one to shirk the opening now offered him, and in November, 1689, he embarked on a smart craft, the *Trinité*, mounting twenty-eight guns and carrying a crew of 128 men.

His first experience was rude enough. The month of November in the Channel rarely offers the most tempting weather to the sailor, and young Duguay Trouin had his full share of gales and fogs, of strong headwinds, accompanied with blinding sleet, of dreary beatings off an iron-bound coast, and never the excitement of a single prize to relieve the miserable monotony of a winter's cruise. A solitary unit in a crew of 128 men on board a craft of 180 tons, his lines were by no means cast in pleasant places, but the life, such as it was, was made light and agreeable so far as it could be, for Marguerite Trouin, our hero's mother, had contributed a considerable sum towards the equipment of the *Trinité*.

A whole year elapsed ere Duguay Trouin smelt powder, for it was not until the month of November, 1690, that the *Trinité* captured, after a short struggle, a small craft hailing from London named *The Three Friends*. Duguay formed part of the prize-crew placed on board the English ship, and in assisting to bring her into port, ran a narrow chance of shipwreck on the ugly reef, the Minquiers, which bars the entrance to St. Malo harbour. And now the run of luck was about to set in the opposite direction.

Within the month four other British ships fell into the hands of the *Trinité*, and on the 16th of December she had a sharp and successful fight with the Dutch Corsair, *Concorde*. The two vessels were equally matched as regards armament, but the crew of the *Trinité* had been weakened by some thirty men escort-

ing prizes to France, and so Captain Fossart fought at a disadvantage. The Malouines have never been accustomed to count the odds, and Fossart was not the man to show a pair of heels to any Dutchman afloat.

At dawn on the 16th the Dutchman was seen hull down to leeward; cracking on all sail, by mid-day the *Trinité* was within gunshot, and firing a blank cartridge signalled the *Concorde* to heave to. No answer being vouchsafed, a shotted gun was fired across her bows, and in reply the Dutch vessel saluted the *Trinité* with a heavy broadside.

For more than two hours the cannonade continued; but the Frenchman having the heavier metal, and, thanks to Colbert's admirable instructions, her crew being better versed in gun-drill, succeeded in inflicting considerable damage on the top-hammer of her foe, receiving in return but little harm. The casualties on the *Concorde*, too, were heavy, and noticing that her fire was beginning to slacken, Fossart ranged alongside and calling away his boarders, was the first to leap on board the enemy's ship.

Young Duguay Trouin sprung over by his side, and this, his first introduction to hand-to-hand fighting, was graven on his memory to the day of his death.

As the Frenchmen dashed on board the enemy's ship, the vessels swung apart, and then again the man at the *Trinité's* tiller brought her up against the *Concorde*. More than one brave fellow, missing his foothold, fell short into the sea, to be crushed to death between the grinding hulls. Amongst the unfortunates was one Jean Desmoulins, an old friend of Duguay Trouin's, and as the novice, young and active, leapt into the mizen-chains of the Dutchman, the brains of his poor messmate were bespattered in his face.

Small time was there for musing why the one should be taken and the other left, for a big Flessinger, seeing but a youth in front of him, rushed on what he flattered himself would be an easy prey; but the fencing lessons of Caen now came in good stead, and though scarcely accustomed to the rolling decks of a small vessel, Duguay Trouin had a keener eye and a quicker hand than his adversary. Deftly avoiding the lumbering sweep of the Dutchman's cutlass, René laid him low with a thrust through the throat; then, seeing his captain hard pressed by three of the enemy, he rushed to Fossart's aid, and here again his knowledge of sword-play proved of incalculable service.

Few sailors, especially those who shipped on Corsair craft, knew aught of the intricacies of *quart* and *tierce*, of points and parries; the pike and cutlasses when wielded by stalwart arms were formidable weapons, and brute force in nine cases out of ten won the day. But Duguay Trouin had as cool a head as he had steady a hand, and he was as nimble of foot as he was quick of eye, and these qualities enabled him, not merely to rid his captain of two out of the three Dutchmen who were making matters unpleasant for the brave old Malouine, but also permitted him to earn more than a novice's share of the glory in the capture of the *Concorde*.

The fight was sharp enough while it lasted, and when at length the white flag of France flew from the Dutch vessel's mast-head, over twenty brave men of Flushing lay stark on the *Concorde's* decks. As one of the prize-crew detached to take the captured vessel home, young Duguay Trouin shared in the tumultuous triumph which greeted the arrival of the Dutch ship as she rounded the mole of St. Malo.

He was destined to share in many a more glorious ovation, but this his first taste of the joys of victory was sweet enough. There on the mole-head stood many a whilom playmate, many a winsome lassie, crowding down to see the entry of the fresh-won prize. There, too, was his mother leaning on the arm of her good cousin, Jean Danycan, himself in younger days a worthy Corsair of the Corsair city, and in the crowd was many a well-known face of priest and merchant, all eagerly joining in the acclamations which greeted the shot-torn craft as, with jury rig and splintered bulwarks, she forged into the inner harbour.

Under the white flag of France flew the tricolour of Holland, and displayed on a board in the mizen-rigging were the names of the six members of the Corsair's crew who had fallen in the gallant fight. The rejoicings were great in the Rue Jean Chatillon that night, for every member of the prize-crew had some fresh version to give of young Duguay Trouin's prowess on the 16th. Besides glorying in her son's bravery, the good widow had the solid satisfaction of feeling that her money had not been risked in vain. The barren success achieved by the *Trinité* during the preceding year had been more than atoned for in the past month, when six valuable prizes had fallen to her share, and a sum equal to the amount invested in her equipment was ready for distribution to the lucky Corsair venturers.

René Duguay Trouin was more than ever determined to continue his new-found calling, and his relatives in no way discouraged him. They were anxious, however, that he should master the educational requirements of his profession, in order that he might be ready as soon as opportunity offered to assume command himself. During his year at sea he had realized the necessity for

a knowledge of navigation, and he applied himself with vigour to mastering the intricacies of solar observations, and such simple knowledge as the sailor of the seventeenth century deemed essential.

In June of the following year, 1691, Duguay Trouin once more embarked as a volunteer on board the *Grenedan*, a smart sailer of 300 tons, mounting eighteen guns, with a crew of 205 men, which craft had been jointly fitted out by the families of Trouin and of Danycan. It may readily be imagined that the position of this young volunteer was made as little irksome as Captain Legoux could make it, and that the greatest deference was paid to his views and to his wishes. Proceeding to the west coast of Ireland, it was not long ere the *Grenedan* entered on her career of victory.

On the 21st of August she sighted a fleet of fifteen merchantmen, which steered for the shelter of Bantry Bay; but, as so often happened in England's wars with France, the *Malouine Corsair* was by far the smartest vessel that day, and, thanks to the able seamanship of old Legoux and the dashing gallantry of the young volunteer, three out of the fifteen vessels were boarded and captured before they reached Dingle Bay. In boarding the second prize, Duguay Trouin narrowly escaped the fate of the *Brave Desmoulins* at the capture of the *Concorde*.

All anxious to be the first on the enemy's decks, no sooner had the two vessels neared than the young volunteer, without waiting to see that the grappling-irons had caught in the rigging or that the craft were lashed to each other, sprung to the mizen-chains of the Englishman; her helmsman, wishing to avoid the shock, kept his own ship away a bit, and Duguay Trouin, jumping short, fell into the water.

Both vessels were moving some six or seven knots, but his fall being seen, a rope was hove him just in time, and he seizing it, was dragged through the water and so on to his own craft. With the eagerness of youth he was yet one of the first amongst the boarders. Dashing aft to where the fight raged thickest he was fortunate enough to wound, disarm and personally receive into his own hands the sword of the English captain, a sturdy man of Kerry, little versed in those intricacies of sword-play which Duguay Trouin had so fortunately for himself mastered at Caen.

On the 5th of September, 1691, the *Grenedan* re-entered St. Malo; following in her wake came the three English prizes, the *Francis Samuel*, 28, the *Europe*, 24, and the *Seven Stars*, 28. For those who have witnessed the return of the Newfoundland fishing-fleet to-day, it is not difficult to picture the welcome accorded to the Corsairs of two hundred years ago.

Pride and grief chased each other by turns from the faces of those who crowded the *cale*: pride at the brave sight before them, grief for those who had fallen in the fray. Amongst those whose pride was unalloyed was Marguerite Duguay Trouin. Her son had now established his merit, and she already pictured him, not as a mere volunteer, but as a captain convoying in a string of prizes even more valuable than those now before her, in the capture of which he had borne so brave a part. More than one member of the *Grenedan's* crew shared the feast that was prepared at the Rue Jean Chatillon that day, and the proud mother was made prouder still by the universal testimony borne to the bravery of her favourite son.

It was not merely in action that his good qualities shone forth. In fair weather or foul he was the life and

soul of the crew; and more than one weather-beaten tar privately informed old Jean Danycan that they would rather sail under René Duguay Trouin than under any captain hailing from St. Malo. But Colbert's rules were still in force. The *Inscription maritime*, yet in its infancy, forbade men eligible for the king's service to enter that of private employers in time of war, and though Seignelay and his successor, Pontchartrain, the Minister of Marine under Louis XIV., were ready enough to grant letters of marque to Corsairs of known valor and fidelity, they were by no means likely to approve of a youth still in his teens being entrusted with an independent command.

Despite these drawbacks it was determined to let young Duguay Trouin make a voyage on his own account, and his friends, unwilling at first to run any great risk, gave him command of a small craft, the *Danycan*, mounting but fourteen guns, and of no great renown either for speed or seamanlike qualities. Thus handicapped, small wonder that the young captain's first voyage was not very propitious. Every craft he chased sailed two knots to his one, and he returned empty-handed to St. Malo—empty-handed, but not without additional honor; for, having chased some vessels into the friendly shelter of the Shannon, Duguay Trouin landed in the night, and seeing some craft beached on the mud in an undefended harbour, attacked and burnt them, then moving inland performed the same feat to a property belonging to Lord Clare.

The utmost consternation spread throughout the neighbourhood. Trouin's fifty men were magnified into a force of all arms, his miserable old craft, the *Danycan*, into a French fleet; and despatches were sent north and south for troops to come and repel the invaders. The

officer commanding William III.'s troops at Limerick was the first on the scene; he, misled by reports and fearing an ambushade failed to act with vigour, and Duguay Trouin was thus enabled to draw off absolutely unmolested, after having caused an incalculable amount of damage, and spread terror throughout the western provinces of Ireland, during his four-and-twenty hours' cruise ashore.

The following year Duguay Trouin was promoted into a better craft, and this time, the fame of his incursion into the county of Limerick having reached the ears of Pontchartrain, letters of marque were granted him, and he was thus permitted to ship a crew of seamen, not of waifs and strays such as formed the ship's company on the *Danycan*. His new ship, named the *Coetquen*, mounted eighteen guns and carried a crew of 140 men. She too was fitted out at the joint expense of the Trouins and Danycans and was destined to scour the Channel in company with another craft, the *Saint Aaron*, also the property of the same firm.

The two vessels sailed from St. Malo early in June, 1692, and steered for the Cornish coast, off which they cruised for some three weeks in the hope of cutting off the West Indian fleets which usually entered the Channel at that season of the year. The young commander's fortune was evidently about to turn once more, for on the 22nd of June a squadron of thirty craft, under convoy of two small frigates mounting sixteen guns, was sighted astern.

Shortening sail and showing English colors, Duguay Trouin enticed the Englishmen within range; then running up the white flag, he bore down on the leading frigate, at the same time that the *Saint Aaron* by his instructions steered into the middle of the squadron

of merchant-ships. These vessels were unable to make any resistance, and Captain Welsh, a man of English extraction, who commanded the *Saint Aaron*, was able to board and man with prize-crews twelve ships; more men he was unable to spare, and the remaining eighteen English vessels, chiefly coasting-craft of small tonnage, were consequently enabled to press on more sail and shape their course for Plymouth.

In the meantime the two frigates were doing their utmost to beat off Duguay Trouin's persistent attacks; but the young captain, with his usual intrepidity, had laid the *Coetquen* alongside the leading English vessel and poured 100 stalwart Bretons over her bulwarks. The fight was long and obstinate, and its issue was for a long time doubtful, for the other English craft ranged up on the *Coetquen's* quarter and made a desperate attempt to take her by boarding.

Welsh, seeing the straits to which the *Coetquen* was reduced, ordered his prize-crews to bear up for St. Malo, and he at once opened a fire of chain-shot and case on the half-deserted decks of the little frigate which had dared to board the *Coetquen*. Coming up under the quarter of this craft, he lashed his bowsprit to her mizen-rigging, threw the whole of his crew on board her, and speedily overpowered the handful of men still living on her decks; then bracing round her yards he caused her to sheer away from Duguay Trouin's ship. Before doing so, however, some twenty or thirty brave Bretons rushed across the English ship's decks, and gaining those of the *Coetquen*, were so enabled to restore the balance of this uneven fight. Welsh, having cut the *Saint Aaron* adrift from his prize, now ranged up on the disengaged quarter of the remaining uncaptured Englishman, and this vessel, taken between two



Had laid the Coetquen alongside the leading English vessel.

fires, had no course open but to haul down her colors.

Thus, thanks to the valuable assistance of the quick-witted Welsh, Duguay Trouin was able to steer for St. Malo with no fewer than fourteen prizes.

But the Channel was not always open to the free passage of French Corsairs. English cruisers patrolled its waters, and many a hard-won prize was recaptured by their ever watchful care. So it happened on this occasion. On rounding Jersey a squadron of six English men-of-war was descried, and Duguay Trouin, trusting to the dangers of the coast and his own knowledge of those dangers, at once shaped his course for the Bréhat islands, lying to the westward of Cape Frehel.

The whole coast is here dotted with dangerous reefs, some of which are invisible at high water, but many more are rarely covered except at exceptionally high spring-tides. The tide, too, runs like a mill-race round the cape, and the young Corsair knew no captain would dare to venture with a king's ship into the neighbourhood of these iron-bound reefs. Before reaching their shelter, however, he had the misfortune of seeing two of his prizes retaken, and he was somewhat exercised at the conduct of Welsh, who, shaping his course for St. Malo with four of the captured merchantmen, seemed more likely even than himself to be overtaken by the English squadron.

Duguay Trouin, though exposed for some hours to the fire of the bow-chasers of the English frigates, rounded Cape Frehel in safety, and was fortunate enough to bring eight of his prizes uninjured into Paimpol harbour.

For the next three or four days the English squadron hovered off the coast, and there seemed every prospect of their attempting a cutting-out expedition.

Duguay accordingly landed his prisoners, and moored his ships across the entrance to the harbour. He thus presented such a formidable broadside of guns to any boats attempting to force an entrance, that after one or two fruitless attempts the English commodore bore up for Jersey. A few days later Trouin convoyed his prizes in safety to St. Malo, where he was glad to find the *Saint Aaron* lying with the remaining four captured ships.

Not content with this successful cruise, Duguay Trouin, as soon as he had filled up with fresh provisions and water, and given his men forty-eight hours' run ashore, once more put to sea, and once more chose the neighbourhood of the Scillies for his cruising-ground. Again he was successful, and this time he was fortunate enough to capture two rich West Indiamen laden with sugar, who struck their flags at the first summons.

Returning to St. Malo with his prizes, the young Corsair found that his name had been submitted by the Naval Commandant of the port to the Minister of Marine, for the command of one of his Majesty's ships. Not that he was to be enrolled as an officer of the navy, and entitled to wear the uniform almost exclusively reserved for members of the aristocracy. No, for the French navy in the days of the Monarchs of France was always a very close borough. The French nation possessed ships for which she was unable to find either officers or men, or indeed money for their fitting out.

The ministers, however, were always willing to lend these ships to solvent merchant firms, who, finding officers and crews and funds for equipping them, stood all risk attendant on their ventures. Prizes were, as I have said before, handed over to the Admiralty courts and

sold by auction, one-tenth being retained by Government, the remainder being divided in proportions as before agreed upon between the firms who commissioned the ship and the crew who manned her. Ofttimes ministers themselves would embark considerable sums in equipping such vessels, especially those about to be commanded by men like Jean Bart, Duguay Trouin, and Forbin.

A code of laws was drawn up for the guidance of captains commanding such craft, and these vessels were recognized by all maritime nations as being engaged in legitimate warfare. Not only did the State derive a very considerable revenue from the captures made by these Corsairs, but the King's navy received valuable reinforcements in the persons of officers and men inured to war, skilled in seamanship, and possessing a profound knowledge of the coasts of France.

It was late in the autumn of 1692 that Duguay Trouin received instructions to proceed to Brest, and there take command of the corvette *Profond*, 32. Not yet twenty years of age, it is scarcely to be wondered at that the Minister of Marine should hesitate to entrust the youthful Trouin with any very valuable command, although indeed the State was guaranteed from all loss by the joint indemnity of the rich firms of Trouin de la Barbinais and Danycan.

The *Profond* was a veritable tortoise at sea, and though the young captain sighted many craft, he was unable to come up to any of them. More than one misfortune befell him. One dark night at the mouth of the Channel he encountered a Swedish man-of-war, and through some inexplicable error (Sweden being then at peace with France), the two craft opened fire on each other. The cannonade lasted until daybreak when the

error was discovered, and when too, in comparing losses, it was discovered that the Swede had lost her fore-top-mast and sixteen men killed and wounded, whilst the *Profond* had been hulled nine times, and had four men killed.

To add to his troubles fever broke out in the ship, and of such a severe and virulent form that ere she could show a clean bill of health, eighty of Duguay Trouin's crew were dead. During the outbreak the *Profond* put into Lisbon, and there was cleansed and fumigated, and the young captain took the opportunity to careen and clean his ship's bottom in the hope of improving her sailing qualities. When ready for sea, Trouin was ordered to proceed to Brest and pay off, for from his own account it was evident that small results would be obtained from any cruises of the *Profond*.

Fortunately, however, for the young captain, the day after leaving Lisbon he sighted a large Spanish vessel bound from the West Indies with rum and sugar; and weakly manned and badly armed, the Spaniard surrendered without firing a shot, and with this one prize Duguay Trouin re-entered Brest. He had been at sea four months, had lost one-third of his crew, from sickness, and had captured but one vessel. The cargo of this one, however, was of such a rich nature that the firms interested in the venture were ready enough to use their influence to obtain a more important command for Duguay Trouin, and the Minister of Marine was equally ready to entrust him with one.

He had been ashore but a month when he received instructions to proceed to Brest, and to commission the *Hercule*, a corvette mounting twenty-eight guns and one of the smartest vessels of her size in the navy.

Early in July the *Hercule* put to sea, and once again

Duguay Trouin chose the neighbourhood of the Scillies as his cruising-ground; and this his second cruise in a king's ship, bade fair to be more prosperous than his last, for within a month of leaving Brest four English prizes were captured, and captured too without the loss of a man.

Then, however, his good fortune deserted him, and he was two whole months at sea without sighting a single hostile ship; provisions and water were low, and his officers and men murmuring loudly, but the young captain showed no intention of returning to port; the murmurs grew louder and louder, and his position became critical, for his tween-decks were crowded with 200 prisoners, who performed their share of lessening daily the food and water. Short commons soon tells on the sailor, and sickness broke out on board; still Duguay Trouin refused to listen to the representations of his officers or to pander to the murmurs of his crew.

At last the discontent culminated into something like open mutiny; the crew came aft in a body, and demanded that the vessel should be put about and a course steered for the nearest French port. One of the youngest men on the ship, Duguay Trouin might have been pardoned had he shown some hesitation on this occasion, but he evinced as much coolness and firmness in the presence of his disaffected crew as he had done when boarding the *Concorde*. Partly by threats, for the Corsair commander was a veritable autocrat on board his ship, partly by persuasion, Duguay Trouin induced his men to return to their duty, promising that if, at the end of seven days, no prize was captured, he would return to France, and further assuring them that the first prize sighted should be handed over to the men to pillage.

Slowly enough did the days pass for the half-starving crew, but all too quickly for the ambitious captain; night succeeded night yet no strange sail was reported; dawn followed dawn, and Duguay Trouin would descend from his morning visit to the main-topmast head more and more despondent. At last the seventh day drew to a close, and on the morrow he would have to relinquish the cruise and stand away for Brest.

As he lay tossing wearily in his bunk, he dozed off, and in a dream saw bearing down on him two full-rigged English ships, lying low in the water, evidently heavily laden. So vivid was the dream that the young captain woke, and leaving his cabin, spent the remainder of the night pacing his little quarter-deck and feverishly watching for dawn. Day broke clear and bright, and as the first streaks of light illumined the sky Duguay Trouin mounted to the topgallant-yard and with anxious eyes swept the horizon. As he himself says in his memoirs, he was so firmly convinced in the truth of his vision that he evinced no surprise at seeing two large vessels, carrying exactly the sail of those he had but an hour before dreamt of, bearing down on him.

Nearing their own coast, Duguay Trouin felt that these vessels would rather avoid than accept an encounter, and he therefore hoisted the English flag, and shortened sail to enable them to come up to him. Little suspecting the nature of the craft they were approaching, the two large merchantmen stood boldly on, and in response to Trouin's blank shot, commanding them to heave-to, merely dipped the English colors, and stood on.

We may judge of their surprise when the next act of their supposed countryman was to run up the white flag of France and to fire a shotted gun across their

bows. Hastily clearing for action, the merchantmen determined on making a stout resistance, but Duguay Trouin's men, inflamed by the hope of pillage, now possessed even more than their accustomed bravery. The task before them was no easy one; gun for gun each of the Englishmen was a match for the *Hercule*; but Duguay Trouin's crew was nearly double that of the enemy, and when, despite the excellent manœuvring of the English captains, he was enabled to lay his craft alongside the enemy and throw his boarders on their decks, the question of ownership was soon decided. Ere the sun was over the main-yard, Duguay Trouin's prize-crews had made all snug on board the English vessels, and were bowling away before a northwesterly breeze for Brest.

The first ship captured was handed over to the crew of the *Hercule* to plunder, in accordance with the young captain's promise; the second one was reserved intact for the Admiralty agent, and seals placed over the hatchways. Leaving the two prizes at Brest, and filling up with provisions and water, Duguay Trouin started once more on a winter cruise. Once more fortune favoured him, for on the 27th of November he captured a fine English bark laden with sugar, rum, and silver ingots from the West Indies; and two days later, when escorting her to Brest, he fell in with and secured a rich Dutch prize. The result of this year's cruising was a handsome profit to the firms which had fitted out the *Hercule*, and a considerable sum was retained by the Admiralty agent at Brest on behalf of the king's share.

After a stay of a month ashore, Duguay Trouin, still supported by his brother and cousin, applied again for a king's ship, and on the 16th of January, 1694, sailed from Brest in the frigate *Diligente*, 40, with a crew of

250 men, with orders to cruise off the coast of Spain, and intercept the vessels arriving from the West Indies.

In the month of February he captured three prizes, two Dutch and one English, and, having despatched them under prize-crews to Brest, put into Lisbon for fresh provisions and water. Early in April he was joined by his old ship the *Hercule*, which brought out his prize-crews, thus again bringing up his complement to 250 men, and the two vessels in company continued their cruising. On the 25th of the same month a squadron of ships-of-war was reported in sight. These proved to be four large Dutch armed merchantmen hailing from Curaçao, laden with rum, cocoa, and bar silver.

Selecting the largest of the four, named the *Panther*, a fine ship carrying thirty-two guns, and ordering the *Hercule* to attack the next largest, Duguay Trouin ran up the French colors, and, in accordance with custom, ordered the Dutchmen to heave-to and be searched. For an answer they threw out the tricolour of Holland and pressed on more sail.

A lively cannonade at once ensued, and a lucky shot having crippled the foremast of the *Panther*, Duguay Trouin was enabled to lash the *Diligente* alongside her and to carry her by boarding. The *Hercule* had not been so fortunate; her opponent was the faster vessel of the two and mounted heavier metal, her captain too would give his antagonist no opportunity of coming alongside, consequently Trouin had the mortification of seeing three out of the four escape him. Giving the command of the *Panther* to his cousin Jacques Boscher, Duguay Trouin stood away for St. Malo, where he arrived the following evening, prize and consort rounding the mole in his immediate wake.

Warm as had been the welcome accorded him when

convoying in small coasting-craft as his prisoners, the seafaring populace outdid their former efforts when they saw their own townsman, a lad just one-and-twenty years of age, work his way up the dangerous passage from the Minquiers, past the island of Cézembre, and moor his little squadron off the Cale by the Arsenal.

However anxious Duguay Trouin might have been to spend a long holiday ashore, he was now in command of one of the king's ships, and personal considerations had to be sunk; he merely remained long enough to fill up with fresh water and provisions, and then, this time without the *Hercule* which had suffered somewhat from the fire of her antagonist in the recent action, stood out alone to sea.

On the 30th of April he fell in with a convoy of thirty colliers escorted by a 56-gun ship, the *Prince of Orange*. Flying the English colors, the *Diligente* sailed into the centre of the convoy without being discovered, then ascertaining that the vessels carried nothing but coal, a practically useless commodity in France, Duguay Trouin stood away from the English fleet. Seeing a vessel thus leaving her escort, the *Prince of Orange* fired a gun to warn the *Diligente*, who was still flying the English colors, to keep on the given course; but the Corsair merely pressed on more sail, in order to avoid capture, for the discovery of her nationality she knew could be no longer delayed.

Seeing that the *Diligente* paid no attention to blank cartridge or to signal, the captain of the English man-of-war began to suspect something wrong, and signalling the convoy to keep close order, he started in pursuit of the Frenchman. But the *Diligente* was the faster sailer of the two, and when she had well out-distanced the man-of-war, Duguay Trouin brailed up his courses

and waited for the *Prince of Orange* to come within range.

Then, with the English colors still flying, he treated the English ship to a broadside, and once more filling her sails the *Diligente* again bore away from pursuit. When out of range Duguay Trouin hoisted his own colors and again hove-to, hoping to be able to dismast the Englishman by a lucky shot, and then to carry her by boarding; but the *Prince of Orange*, fearing to lose some of her convoy, and satisfied with having chased away the Corsair, changed her course and rejoined the squadron under her charge.

It was impossible that the young captain's career should continue without a check. Hitherto, he had passed through some privations and many dangers, he had in the course of his four and a half years' sea-service risen to the rank of commander, had shared in the capture of over thirty craft of various rigs and sizes, as yet he had escaped without a scratch, and had on more than one occasion, by good seamanship and by gallantry, brought himself clear from situations which looked as if they could only end in his capture.

Emboldened by these successes, Duguay Trouin began to consider himself as well-nigh gifted with some special quality. He was already looked upon as the leading Corsair of the Corsair city, and there were not wanting men in Brittany who put him on a par with Jean Bart of Dunkirk, the most popular of all French naval heroes; but Duguay Trouin's pride was to receive an awkward fall.

The morning of the 12th of May broke dull and heavy, a dense summer fog obscured the horizon, and the *Diligente* lay becalmed some thirty miles south of the Scillies. Ever and anon a little puff of wind would

arise, enough to fill the light upper sails of the frigate, but not enough to clear away the fog. The wind, such as there was, was blowing up from the south-east, and Duguay Trouin meant to take advantage of it, and to round the islands for the purpose of scouring the Bristol Channel, in which at this season of the year ships from the West Indies might generally be found.

The fog grew denser and denser all the forenoon, and the wind fell to nearly a dead calm; the Corsair, fearing he might be driven on the islands, determined on heaving-to until it lifted, his men, wearied with inaction, were lying on the decks, some playing cards or dominos, others patching sails or furbishing up arms, none thinking of the danger into which they were leisurely drifting,—every man had a firm faith in their captain's star.

Suddenly the man on the look-out shouted a sail on the lee-bow, and in almost the same breath reported two more on the weather-bow. In a moment all was bustle, bustle but not confusion, for Duguay Trouin had trained his men with almost the discipline of a man-of-war's crew; quickly the men got to quarters, whilst the captain slightly changed his course with the object of approaching the nearest ship to ascertain her nationality.

A few brief seconds ended the suspense. The long pennant hanging idly from the topgallant mast-head and the ensign flapping lazily at the mizen-peak showed an English man-of-war, whilst the double row of open ports proved to the young Corsair that there was but one course open to him. His keen eyes showed him that the two other vessels were also ships-of-war, and he now knew that he was in the very grasp of a squadron cruising at the mouth of the channel, under the command of Admiral Sir David Mitchell.

There was for a moment the bare hope that his vessel in the fog might be mistaken for one of the squadron, and to favor this supposition, Duguay Trouin determined to run up English colors, but the look-out on the *Adventure* had already made out the strange craft, and a blank cartridge from the English frigate summoned the Corsair to heave to.

The *Malouine*, however, rapidly counted his chances. In his own ship's speed he had the fullest confidence, and he had no wish to see the inside of an English prison; by running close in shore and doubling the islands he might shake off his pursuers, at the worst—should his attempt fail—he could but fall into their hands. A bid for escape was therefore determined on, and taking no notice of the Englishman's gun beyond hanging out the English ensign, Duguay Trouin held on his course. The English squadron was heading to the north-east, he making to the westward.

The *Adventure*, seeing no notice was taken of her summons, repeated it with a shotted gun, and at once signalled to her consorts the presence of the stranger; at the same time she went about and stood after the Frenchman. The wind was too light to permit the *Diligente* to gain much on her adversary, and all chance of escape was banished by the first broadside of the English frigate, which, flying high over the *Diligente's* decks, hurtled through her top-hamper and shattering both topmasts, sent masts and spars crashing down on deck, many men being injured in their fall.

Although in the very midst of the hostile squadron, the young captain's presence of mind did not desert him. To escape in his own vessel was an impossibility, but he instantly conceived a plan of action which, hopelessly

daring in its conception, was helplessly impossible of execution.

As the *Adventure* ranged alongside to demand surrender of the dismasted Frenchman, Duguay Trouin, whose vessel still had some way on her, put his helm hard up, and crashing into the frigate's sides called on his men to board and capture her—the wild idea coursed through his brain that he might overpower the English crew, make himself master of their vessel, and abandoning the *Diligente* to the enemy, carry the *Adventure*, a larger and more powerful and more heavily-armed vessel, into St. Malo as his prize.

The English captain was no novice in the art of naval warfare, and as the French crew endeavoured to board by the fore-chains, they were met with such a volley of musketry from the small-arms men in the tops, and such a fierce assault from the blue jackets on the deck, that they fell back checked on to their own craft; at the same time putting his own helm down, he caused the *Adventure* to fall away from the *Diligente*, and at once reopened fire on the floating wreck; the Corsair replied with spirit and execution, but it was evident that surrender could not long be stayed.

The *Monk*, a large two-decker of sixty-six guns, now ranged up under the lee of the *Diligente*, and also opened fire on her, whilst three other ships, the *Canterbury*, *Dragon*, and *Ruby*, were slowly coming up to join in the unequal combat, and already with their pivot-guns were raking the unfortunate Corsair from stern to stem. To add to the other dangers, fire now broke out in the hold of the *Diligente*, and, though Duguay Trouin refused to listen to any proposal of surrender, his men by main force surrounded him and hauled down their colors.

It was some moments ere, owing to the fog and heavy smoke, this act of surrender could be seen; but gradually the fire slackened and then died away, and with it Duguay's luck died also, for almost the last shot fired from the *Monk* struck the young captain in the groin, and dashed him senseless on the deck.

Tenderly raising their gallant commander, his men at once carried him below, and so he was spared the humiliation of witnessing the final scene, though, through the courtesy of his opponents, this was of a nature to have soothed rather than irritated his pride. On learning what a youthful opponent was the hero who had thus encountered the full force of five English men-of-war, the captain of the *Monk* himself boarded the *Diligente*, and arranged that the young captain should be transferred to his own vessel, placed in his own bunk, and tended him, as Duguay Trouin owns in his memoirs, as his own child. Such treatment was but a just recompense for the Malouine's aptitude and gallantry—a gallantry which unfortunately had caused the deaths of no less than forty men on board the *Diligente*, and nearly double that number on the two English ships-of-war.

Taking the Frenchman in tow, the squadron bore up for Plymouth, reaching that port on the 2nd of June. Here again Duguay Trouin must have been flattered at the treatment accorded him. He was at once admitted to parole, and, though his men were imprisoned in the Citadel, he was allowed to communicate with them freely through two members of his crew who were placed at his disposal as servants.

Unfortunately the generous treatment was not allowed to continue. Sir David Mitchell's squadron once more put to sea, and in the captain of the *Monk*, Duguay Trouin lost a powerful protector; soon, too, he

was to meet in the captain of the *Prince of Orange* a bitter foe.

In the middle of August that ship put into Plymouth for repairs. Hearing of the capture of the renowned Corsair, the captain, Stackpoole, had the curiosity to visit the prize, and there recognized in her the adversary who had treated him so cavalierly on the 30th of April. Complaints were at once lodged with the port admiral, and Duguay Trouin, on being interrogated, was unable to deny that he had fired a broadside at the *Prince of Orange* before displaying his own colors.

This act, a clear breach of international law, exposed the young Corsair to being treated as a pirate, and the irate Stackpoole did not hesitate to press on the admiral the necessity of making an example of Duguay Trouin. More humane than the captain, and secretly admiring the young captain for his gallant fight with the *Adventure* and the *Monk*, the admiral contented himself with ordering Duguay Trouin's removal to the Citadel, where, though circumscribed as to his exercise, he was still almost a prisoner at large, allowed to communicate with the outer world by means of his servants, permitted to receive visitors of either sex, to entertain guests, and generally treated as an officer of superior rank, not as a mere Corsair captain.

The change, though irksome, was fraught with much good. As a prisoner on parole Duguay Trouin was in honor bound to make no efforts to escape, as a prisoner under watch and ward he could now use his utmost endeavors to obtain his freedom, and though months elapsed ere his wound healed, and autumn turned to winter and winter to spring ere the use of the shattered limb was regained, Duguay never lost hope, nor did he shrink from the many difficulties which stood between

him and liberty. Opportunities of gaining that freedom were few and far between, and if it was to be gained, it must be effected by the most precarious means.

At last an opening presented itself. Duguay Trouin, from the days of his truandhood at Caen, had always been a devout admirer of women, and if we may judge from some of his biographers his successes in the field of love had been no less striking than those gained at sea.

Even at Plymouth he had experienced a double captivity, and had found himself, when a prisoner on parole looking anxiously forward to his release by exchange, entangled in the meshes of a fair *compatriote*, the wife of a Devonshire merchant. The lady apparently was willing to risk a good deal on behalf of the brave young sailor; and availing himself of the privilege accorded him of receiving visitors in the Citadel, Duguay Trouin extended his invitations to the worthy merchant's wife, and she, nothing loth, paid frequent visits to the wounded hero.

She was soon won over to the congenial task of assisting him towards obtaining his liberty, and with the shrewdness of her sex brought her batteries to bear on the captains of neutral ships, who in the course of business visited her husband's house. The interest she suddenly developed in mercantile affairs must have somewhat surprised her husband, and the eagerness with which she sought after knowledge on matters nautical ought to have awakened his suspicions; but, he, good worthy man, slumbered on in contented ignorance, whilst she day by day increased her store of knowledge, and day by day kept her countryman informed of the vessels in harbour, their nationalities, the ports to which they were bound, and the dates of their sailing.

Week after week, month after month, vessels entered and cleared from Plymouth, and Duguay Trouin still beat his heart out in the misery of his confinement; but the fair *intrigante* still worked on, undisheartened by failure or undismayed by the difficulties before her. A year had nearly elapsed since that foggy May morning on which the *Diligente* struck her flag to the English squadron, when a Swedish vessel commanded by an old admirer of Duguay Trouin's fresh love, entered the Hamoaze.

At once the young Frenchwoman brought all her power to bear on the still faithful Swede, and finally succeeded in enlisting him in her cause.

At the young Corsair's suggestion the Swede's pinnace, its masts, sails, and oars, together with six muskets and six cutlasses, were purchased, and such a handsome price was paid for these—to the captive—priceless articles that the Swedish captain would gladly have sold his ship from truck to kelson at the same rate. The gallant deeds of Duguay Trouin were still the theme of public talk in Plymouth, and the Swedish sailors were glad enough to wend their way to the Citadel and listen to the yarns of the Corsair crew.

With true sailor-like generosity, these tars soon busied themselves with projects for Trouin's escape, and more than one suit of clothes was quietly smuggled into the Citadel to facilitate this great end. At last all plans were completed. The pinnace lying in a little cove outside the town was well freighted with cooked meat, bread, biscuit, water, and a keg of good English beer. Thanks to the liberal largesses of the good merchant's wife, Duguay Trouin succeeded in bribing one of the officers of the garrison, and on the 18th of June, taking advantage of this gentleman being on guard, the Corsair

captain, his first lieutenant, Nicolas Dupré, his doctor, Antoine l'Hermitte, and his own servant, dressed in the clothes of the Swedish sailors, boldly left the prison, and sauntered through the town to an inn where every preparation had been made for their reception.

As night fell they drove down to the cove where the pinnace was lying in charge of a trusty Swede, and at once pushed off to sea. Twice in the course of the night they found themselves hailed by English ships-of-war and twice did they give themselves up for lost, but fortunately these vessels were making for harbour and held a fair wind. Seeing the little craft standing out to sea, they were satisfied with the answer "fishermen" shouted back in response to their hails, and with thankful hearts our escaped prisoners saw the Englishmen hold on their course without troubling themselves any further about such a cockle-shell.

With the dawn the breeze freshened and soon developed into a strong gale, heavy seas broke over the little craft, threatening every moment to engulf her, and whilst Duguay Trouin at the tiller was occupied every moment in guarding against her rounding to and capsizing, his crew at the bottom of the boat were busy baling out the water which poured in in gallons. Fortunately the kindly thoughtfulness of the little Frenchwoman had provided them with a good meal before embarking, otherwise they would have fared badly in mid-channel; the salt water had thoroughly soaked the tasty patty prepared for them, and their cask of beer in a sudden lurch had gone over the side.

Happily the wind veered round to the north-east, but now all Duguay Trouin's efforts were needed to prevent the little boat being overwhelmed by the great waves which, dashing on in tempestuous confusion, seemed as

if nothing could prevent their sweeping over the frail boat.

To heave-to was to increase the danger of capture, so with close-reefed sail and two oars out over the sides, the little pinnace sped on. Her crew were Bretons, well used to open boats in heavy weather, and they were leaving behind them the unpleasant memories of an English prison, whilst before them, in their mind's eye, loomed high the cliffs of Brittany. Small need had Duguay Trouin to enjoin them to be watchful. Night came on, and by means of a small lantern thoughtfully provided by the Swedish captain, the young captain was enabled to steer a compass course for the Breton coast. The state of the sea compelled him to avoid the dangerous race of Alderney, its tumbling waters would most assuredly have swamped his boat, and so, giving the islands a wide berth, he passed to the westward of Jersey.

Small rest had the little crew that night, constant baling was necessary to keep the boat afloat, and constant watchfulness both at the sheet, the oars, and the helm, to prevent the heavy rollers dashing over her stern. As morning broke the wind fell considerably, and with it the sea calmed down; all cause for anxiety, except from the enemy's cruisers, was now at an end, and Duguay Trouin gave orders to shake out the reefs from the main-sail and then to set the mizen, and now the little craft leaning over under the pressure of canvas bowled through the waters as if she too shared her crew's anxiety to sight the coast of France. Hungry and thirsty, the little crew dared not drink salt water, and the taste of the sodden biscuit was merely conducive to thirst.

As the second night drew on their sufferings became more acute, but Duguay cheered them up, assuring them

that ere dawn broke they would be in sight of land. Unprovided with instruments save a tiny compass, they were unable to judge their position, though from the rough dead-reckoning kept by the captain they judged they must be abreast of Jersey. The wind held favourable throughout the night, and all hands were able to get some rest—such rest as only sailors can appreciate, who have been tossed at the sport of the winds and the waves in a five-and-twenty foot open boat.

As the sun rose, Duguay awoke his men with a joyous cry; for there, dead to leeward, were the rocky isles of Brehat, behind which he had sought shelter from the English frigates just three years previously, and behind them was the rugged coast of Brittany. In less than an hour the boat was entering the little harbour of Treguier.

With the simple faith of Breton fishermen—a faith still undiminished by the proselytizing effects of Republicanism—the first act of the escaped Corsairs was to repair to the village church of Treguier, and there, amidst the votive offerings of many a shipwrecked sailor, to return thanks for their happy deliverance. Already one of Breton's best known heroes, Duguay Trouin and his brave companions were accorded a hearty welcome by the good people of Treguier. Fresh clothes were supplied them, and a hearty meal prepared and eaten amidst general rejoicing; then hiring a country cart, the whole party set off for St. Malo, there to lay before the Naval Commandant the whole story of the loss of the *Diligente*, now a twice-told tale, and of the fortunate escape of a portion of her crew. Their rude passage from Plymouth to Treguier occupied but fifty hours, their jolting ride from Treguier to St. Malo took them ten days.

Duguay Trouin was not permitted to remain long inactive. The gallantry he had displayed in his action with the English squadron outweighed, in Pontchartrain's mind, the loss of the *Diligente*, and within a month of his landing at Treguier the young captain received directions to repair to Rochelle, and there commission the new frigate *François*, 48 guns, which had been placed at the disposal of the now wealthy firm, Trouin de la Barbinais.

In the month of October, Duguay Trouin was ready for sea, and shaped his course for the Irish coast. Prizes tumbled in fast; ere the year closed five vessels, averaging from 300 to 500 tons, laden with tobacco and sugar, fell into his power.

The new year opened auspiciously, for on the 3rd of January, 1694, a large ship, hailing from New England with a rich cargo of skins and a deck-load of spars destined for masting ships of the English navy, was captured without a shot being fired. From this vessel Duguay Trouin learnt that a large and rich fleet of merchantmen hailing from North America was but a few hours' sail astern, and that their sole escort was two men-of-war, the *Nonsuch* and the *Boston*.

Though his own ship's company was weakened by the crews working his six prizes to France, though his decks were encumbered with nearly 200 English prisoners, and though the two vessels he proposed to attack carried eighty-eight guns against his own forty-eight, Duguay Trouin determined on inflicting on the English a defeat which should purge his own conscience of the defeat and loss of the *Diligente*.

Towards noon the look-out signalled the English squadron, and at 3 p.m. the *François* was within gunshot of the *Boston*, a fine two-decker pierced for seven-

ty-four guns, but on this occasion she carried none on her lower deck, and had but thirty-eight mounted. Duguay Trouin from the first showed the Englishmen he wished to fight. The white flag of France fluttered from his mizen-peak, and another hung over his taff-rail, whilst the absence of the streaming pennant from his mast-head clearly showed he was no king's ship.

The *Boston*, on seeing the nature of the craft, fired a shotted gun as a signal for the *François* to heave-to; for all answer Duguay Trouin stood across the line-of-battle ship's bows, and when within pistol-shot discharged a broadside which swept the English ship from stem to stern, then quickly bouting ship, stood once more across her wake, and treated the *Boston* to a second broadside.

As the smoke from the twenty guns cleared away, the main-top mast of the *Boston* was seen to snap off at the cap, and all its wreckage, with that of the main-yard which too had been shot away in the slings, fell in hopeless confusion on the Englishman's decks. Again altering his course, Duguay Trouin steered alongside the *Boston* and passing under her lee, all shrouded with falling spars and tattered sails and useless rigging, poured in a third broadside, which committed fearful havoc.

Lying helpless on the water, the *Boston* was unable to evade the last assault, and the guns on her main-deck were blinded, as it were, by the sails and spars hanging over the sides, so that the Frenchman stood on to attack the *Nonsuch* without having received any injury. Keeping to windward of his new antagonist, who was rather hampered in her movements by a merchant-vessel, Duguay Trouin succeeded in pouring in a broadside at close range, and then heading straight for the English-

man he managed to lay his own ship close alongside her, and, as the majority of the *Nonsuch* crew were working the lower-deck guns, the boarders of the *François* were soon in possession of the upper deck; but in the meantime the lower-deck guns were being worked with terrible accuracy, and the French suffered heavily from a party of small-arms men barricaded in the high fore-castle—man after man fell dead, and not all Duguay Trouin's heroism could induce his crew to close on that well-served fire.

The fight thus raged for well-nigh half an hour, when streams of smoke were seen issuing from the ports of the *Nonsuch*, and these curling upwards were quickly licking the shot-torn sails of the *François*. Still, loth to leave his nearly-won prize, Duguay Trouin called on his men to storm the fore-castle, and he himself led them forward with all his usual dash; but just then a cry arose that the *François* too was in flames, and Duguay, calling off the boarders, cut his ship adrift.

Having subdued the fire, which had taken but a slight hold of the *François*, he once more steered alongside the flame-covered Englishman and poured broad-side after broadside into her. To these the *Nonsuch* replied with spirit and precision, and the *Boston* ever and anon sent her quota towards equalizing the fight. In the meantime the merchant-fleet had, in obedience to signal, stood on for Plymouth, and as night fell the Corsair and the two English men-of-war were alone visible. With the night the noise of the guns slackened and finally ceased altogether, and then the crew of the *Nonsuch* bent their utmost efforts towards subduing the fire, which threatened to destroy their ship, and the crew of the *Boston* worked hard at sending up a jury-mast, in

order that they might offer more serviceable aid to their consort than they had yet been able to afford.

But fortune was to favour the French Corsair even more decidedly than on the preceding day.

As dawn broke it was found that the *François* was some six miles from the *Nonsuch*, which in turn was nearly three miles from the *Boston*, and to Duguay Trouin's great delight, he perceived that the *Boston* had very imperfectly succeeded with her jury-rig. He determined then on first attacking the *Nonsuch*, and by 9 a.m. he was within range of her stern guns. Firing only an occasional shot from his light bow-chasers, Duguay Trouin waited until within half-range of the English ship; then, putting his helm hard down, ran under her stern and delivered a double-shotted volley from his twenty-four broadside guns.

Slowly bending over to leeward, the good ship staggered under the effects of that discharge, and as she righted herself, her main and mizen masts fell over the side and left her a helpless wreck. But from the fore-top mast-head flew the English colors, whilst others were quickly nailed to the shot-torn stumps of the standing spars, and from her charred and still smoking ports an intermittent cannonade was yet kept up. Leaving the *Nonsuch* for a time, the *François* filled and stood on in pursuit of the *Boston*, which ship, foreseeing the impossibility of maintaining the combat, was crowding on all the sail she could spread in her crippled condition, in the hopes of escape.

But the *François* at the best of times was more than a match for the American-built ship, and now that the latter was standing on under jury main-topmast and with a mere apology for a main-yard, the Corsair was not long in overhauling her. Seeing the *Nonsuch* a help-

less cripple unable to render any assistance, his own ship badly hulled, and his crew much reduced by casualties, the captain of the *Boston* for all answer to Duguay Trouin's first broadside hauled down his flag, and lowering a boat proceeded to consummate his surrender by handing over his sword to the young French Corsair on the decks of the *François*.

The task of transferring a moiety of the crew of the *Boston* to the French ship and of manning the prize with Breton seamen occupied some time, and Duguay Trouin stood by her until he had personally satisfied himself by close inspection that there was little danger of the *Boston's* recapture, then he put his ship about and bore down once more on the *Nonsuch*. But the *Nonsuch* was in no condition to prolong the combat; the fire, though got under was still smouldering, owing to its ravages many of the main-deck guns could not be worked; her fore-mast was alone standing, and over 180 wounded men cumbered her decks—under these circumstances the captain had had no alternative but to haul down his flag at the approach of the *François*.

And now occurred an incident that must have afforded unparalleled satisfaction to Duguay Trouin. Until now the name of his antagonist was unknown to him, but on proceeding on board the last-captured prize to superintend the removal of prisoners, he learnt that the *Nonsuch* was the identical vessel which in May, 1689, had, after an equally severe combat, captured the two Dunkirk Corsairs, the *Railleuse* and the *Jeux*, commanded respectively by Jean Bart and Forbin, and that the commissions as captains in the French navy of these two renowned sailors had been carefully preserved as trophies on the *Nonsuch*.

In handing over his sword to the Malouine Corsair,

the captain of the *Nonsuch* said, "Sir, five years ago this vessel, after a fight as gallant and obstinate as the one fought to-day, captured two of your countrymen. You have emulated their brave deeds, and with this sword I have the honour to transfer to you the commissions of Captains Jean Bart and the Chevalier de Forbin. The goddess of war is a fickle dame to serve, and she has treated the *Nonsuch* very cavalierly in thus compelling her to surrender her most cherished trophies. The bitterness of my surrender is softened by the knowledge that my crew have done their duty, and that I have been conquered by the smartest sailor and most gallant fighter I have yet met."

The remainder of the day was spent in repairing damages and placing all three ships in a condition to make the run to the coast of France. The *François* had suffered heavily. Her fore-topgallant and mizen-topmast had been shot away, her sails were in ribbons, her mizen-yard burnt and charred, her bulwarks almost entirely carried away, and half her crew either killed or wounded. Indeed the journey to Brest was beset with many dangers, for Duguay Trouin had twice as many prisoners on board his own ship as he had fighting-men, and he was compelled to batten down his hatches and keep these men below, in order to avoid the possibility of their attempting to capture his ship.

Jean Boscher, who was placed in command of the *Nonsuch*, had even a more arduous task to perform. Duguay Trouin could spare him but twenty-five men to work the prize home, and he was compelled to make the slightly wounded prisoners work at the pumps in order to save the ship from sinking. The *Boston* had suffered little in comparison, and was soon sufficiently provided with jury-spars to warrant Nicolas Thomas,

who was placed in command of her, parting company from the other ships and standing on alone for France.

To add to the troubles which beset the *Nonsuch* and the *François*, a heavy gale sprang up, and Boscher was compelled to throw all his guns and anchors overboard in order to lighten the ship. Perseverance and seamanship as we all know—did not Rous navigate the *Pique* home without a rudder?—will accomplish everything, and on the 24th of January the *Nonsuch* and *François* entered Brest, little more, it is true, than floating wrecks; yet in their crippled, shattered condition, they were still prouder tokens of Duguay Trouin's gallant fight. As for the *Boston*, her fate was not so fortunate.

Having parted from the *Nonsuch* and *François* on the morrow of the fight, Thomas shaped his course for St. Malo. The heavy gale, which nearly proved fatal to the *Nonsuch*, drove him much to the eastward and compelled him to take shelter under the lee of the island of Ouessant; Thomas then determined to bear up for Brest as soon as the weather moderated, but his crippled condition attracted the notice of four Dutch Corsairs, who, like him, had run for shelter to the Fromveur channel, and after as sturdy a fight as circumstances would permit, Nicolas Thomas had the mortification of seeing his prize retaken and himself transferred to the cabin of a Dutch craft.

Duguay Trouin met with a joyous reception at Brest as well as at St. Malo. Merchant-ships and Corsairs commissioned by letters of marque were prizes common enough in those days, but an English line-of-battle ship was quite a different matter. Few of these had been brought into Brest harbour and the capture of one by a mere Corsair captain was a red-letter day in the annals of the young French navy. The news was received

with the most intense satisfaction at Versailles; and Pontchartrain, the Minister of Marine, wrote a most flattering letter to the young Malouine, thanking him for his gallant behaviour, and announcing to him that the king had been pleased to bestow upon him a sword of honour.

The name of the young Malouine was now familiar enough in the mouths of all French seamen, and it was foreseen that he would be soon lifted from the ranks of those who fought under mere letters of marque; but the jealousy of outsiders was strong in the French navy, and though Duguay Trouin was second to no man in the service, either in aptitude for warfare or for seaman-like qualities, and far ahead of any man of his own age and standing, Pontchartrain hesitated before granting him permission to don the king's livery.

He was, however, to be employed in a more honourable manner than mere privateering, and was directed to join the fleet under the command of the Marquis of Nesmond so soon as the *François* should be ready to proceed to sea. It was late in July, 1696, before the *François* left the port of Brest; her injuries had been more severe than had been anticipated, and Duguay Trouin was too practical a sailor to overlook anything when fitting her out, as the cost of this fell on his brother's firm, and he was largely interested in the success of his captures. He spent much time in thoroughly overhauling her, giving her entirely fresh masts and spars, mounting heavier guns in her waist, and rendering her in every way fit for her new calling.

Within a very few days of putting to sea, the squadron, which consisted of five vessels mounting from forty-eight to fifty-six guns, encountered three English

men-of-war, the largest of which, the *Esperance*, carried seventy-four.

Nesmond signalled to carry on all sail in pursuit, and soon the *François*, the fastest sailer in the squadron, was within range of and had opened fire on the *Esperance*. The other French ships were some distance astern; Nesmond, anxious for the safety of the *François*, which was nearly overmatched, signalled Duguay Trouin to heave-to until the rest of the squadron was abreast of him; the Malouine had no course but to obey, though he had the mortification of seeing the *Esperance* stand on and rejoin the other English ships. In less than a quarter of an hour, Nesmond once more signalled to resume the chase, and ere evening closed in, the *Esperance* had struck, not, however, to the *François*, but to the *Excellent*, Nesmond's flag-ship.

The young Malouine bitterly complained of the conduct of the Marquis, and stoutly asserted that jealousy was at the bottom of his vacillating and contradictory orders. A few days later two large ships bound from the Dutch East Indian settlements, laden with sugar, spices, and a valuable general cargo, fell into Nesmond's hands. Satisfied with his successes, the Marquis returned to Brest, and Duguay Trouin, irritated beyond measure at the treatment accorded him, made interest with Pontchartrain, and succeeded in being removed from Nesmond's command.

On leaving Nesmond's squadron, Duguay Trouin was directed to proceed to the coast of Spitzbergen, in company with the *Fortuné* frigate, there to harry the Dutch fishing-fleets. But news of their approach had been obtained through spies in Paris, and on the arrival of the French ships off the island, they found the fleets had

dispersed to neighbouring harbours; blockading these for some weeks, in the hope of picking up a stray prize, the Corsair had the mortification of seeing his provisions diminish and his water give out, before a single stranger had been signalled.

Disaffection was rife amongst the crews, and Duguay Trouin felt obliged to bear up for the coast of Ireland, where it was hoped, by a raid ashore, he might refill his water casks and seize some live-stock. For himself, ever sanguine, he felt convinced the cruise would terminate auspiciously, and endeavoured to instil his own cheerfulness into the hearts of his men; he reminded those who had sailed with him in other voyages of his prediction when in command of the *Hercule*, and promised them similar good fortune this voyage.

Still the discontent spread, and Duguay Trouin had to promise that, if within a week no prize was captured, he would bear up for St. Malo. Once more the Corsair's good fortune came to his aid, though we hear of no prophetic dream this time. On the morning of the seventh day, three sails were sighted ahead, and to the intense delight of the Frenchmen, these vessels, powerfully armed ships, hove-to, ran up English colors, and evidently were prepared to fight.

The *Fortuné* was nearest the enemy, and passing under the stern of the sternmost ship gave her a raking volley, and then stood on to engage the second ship, leaving the one flying the commodore's flag to the care of Duguay Trouin. In a few moments the *François* was alongside the Englishman, and hotly engaged; reverting to his old manœuvres, Duguay Trouin succeeded in lashing his ship alongside the Englishman, and his crew, inflamed by the promise of plunder, were not long in capturing the enemy.

Turning his attention to the unengaged ship, Duguay Trouin carried her by boarding also; the *Fortuné*, not belying her name, after a severe and prolonged fight, had likewise succeeded in compelling the third ship to haul down her colors. The prizes proved to be the *Defence*, 58, *Resolution*, 56, and *Black Prince*, 40, armed East Indiamen, laden with silk, indigo, copper, and gold-dust. Having secured his captures, Duguay Trouin bore up for Brest, but being driven south by contrary winds, took his prizes into Port Louis, and handed them over to the Admiralty agent there.

At Port Louis, Duguay Trouin received instructions to proceed to Versailles; the news of this successful cruise had reached the court, and the *Malouine Corsair* was now to be numbered among those men whom kings delight to honor. The young captain was overwhelmed with his reception. In his memoirs he quaintly says, "The great Monarch deigned to appear satisfied with my poor services. I left his presence penetrated to my inmost heart with the sweetness of his character, and the nobility displayed in his very smallest actions; my desire to render myself worthy of his esteem is more ardent than ever."

Before leaving the court, Duguay Trouin was appointed by Pontchartrain to the command of his old prize, now metamorphosed into the *Sanspareil*, mounting fifty guns of the heaviest calibre. Proceeding to Port Louis, the young captain busied himself in superintending her equipment. He had great hopes that her English build and appearance would impose on foreign vessels, and so enable him to get within range of ships which now kept at a respectful distance from French-built craft.

In the month of July, 1697, the *Sanspareil* was ready

for sea, and Duguay Trouin at once proceeded to the coasts of Spain, in the hope of intercepting the West Indian fleets. On nearing Vigo he learnt from a French fishing-craft that three large Dutch vessels were in that port, filling up with water.

Never hesitating an instant, Duguay Trouin, running up English colors, boldly entered the port, and of course was permitted to do so without question; two of the Dutchmen were just weighing anchor to start on their homeward voyage, and this they did with all the more confidence as they were expecting an English vessel-of-war to escort them through the Channel. Standing out of harbour in their wake, Duguay excited but little surprise until, when clear of the guns of the harbor works, he hauled down English colors, threw out the white flag of France, and summoned the Dutchmen to surrender.

Resistance was useless; they at once surrendered, and Duguay Trouin, placing prize-crews on board, steered a course for Port Louis. During this voyage he narrowly escaped losing his own ship and her two prizes, for on the morning of the 28th of July he found himself a few miles to leeward of an English fleet, which detached a 26-gun frigate to speak him. Flying English colors, the *Sanspareil* proceeded on her way, whilst the prizes, in obedience to Duguay's instructions, carrying on all sail endeavored to make good their escape.

Surprised that the *Sanspareil* took no notice of her signals, the frigate, which had outdistanced the English fleet, fired a shotted gun to call the attention of the supposed English ship; upon which Duguay Trouin hove-to until the frigate was within easy range. Then running up the white flag, the *Sanspareil* opened such a terrible fire on the astonished frigate that she was com-

pelled to sheer off and hang out signals of distress for her consorts to come up to her assistance. These were too near at hand for Duguay Trouin to hope to carry her by boarding before they came up, so he was forced to content himself with the damage already inflicted and to stand on his course, thankful to have secured the escape of his prizes.

On his arrival at Brest, Duguay Trouin induced his brother's firm to fit out a small craft, the *Lenore*, of sixteen guns, and to entrust her to the command of his younger brother Etienne, a youth not yet twenty years of age, but who in the three years he had sailed in the *Hercule* and *Sanspareil* had shown himself possessed of skill and courage. Alas! that the lad's career was to be such a short one.

Late in August the two vessels, the *Sanspareil*, 50, and *Lenore*, 16, left Brest for the coasts of Spain, off which they cruised for some weeks without sighting a possible prize. Duguay Trouin, however, was determined not to leave these waters, as he was most anxious to intercept merchantmen known to be due from the Philippines. He had ever found Spanish ships richly laden and not given to vain fighting, and, though a very tiger in his love of blood himself, Duguay was sensible enough to know that easily-captured prizes involved less risk, and entailed greater profits than those craft which were only mastered after heavy and sanguinary engagements. Desirous then of not leaving the coast of Spain, Trouin determined to fill up with water at some convenient spot, and so avoid the voyage to Port Louis or Bordeaux.

Putting into a sheltered bay between Vigo and Cape Finisterre, the two vessels came to an anchor, and Du-

guay Trouin disembarked in the *Sanspareil's* pinnace with twenty well-armed men. Pulling in to where a small stream emptied itself into the sea, the captain was preparing to land, when he was warned off by desultory shots from a small work on the brow of a neighbouring hill.

Not stopping to count the odds, and knowing that, in compliance with the instructions he had left with his brother Etienne, a strong landing-party would be sent ashore as soon as the sound of the firing reached the ships, Duguay Trouin immediately sprang on shore, followed by his little crew, and at once proceeded to mount the hill whence the shots came.

As they reached the crest some ten or a dozen men hastily left the work, and retired quickly on to a neighbouring village, round which groups of armed men were seen collecting. To carry this before the arrival of his reinforcements Duguay knew to be impossible, he therefore contented himself with keeping up a sharp fire on a body who seemed disposed to oust him from his position, and on the arrival of Etienne with 150 well-armed men, he at once made plans for assaulting the village and carrying off its wheat, oil, wine, and live-stock to his ships.

Directing Etienne with a company of fifty men to work round the flank of the village, and attack it where it seemed more open, Duguay Trouin himself advanced against the place through some groves of olive-trees, which partly sheltered his men until they arrived within some seventy yards of the place; then, with drums beating and loud shouts of "*En avant, mes gars, en avant,*" Duguay Trouin dashed to the front.

His men were as keen to follow him here as in any

boarding expedition, and the Spaniards equally averse to meeting him hand to hand, for no sooner had the little party of Frenchmen emerged from the olive-trees than the fire which had galled them considerably in their advance ceased, and the leader of the Spaniards with lowered flag came forward in token of surrender, whilst his men in obedience to his commands grounded their arms.

On the far side of the village the French had suffered more severely, and Duguay Trouin learnt with the most profound sorrow that his brother Etienne had been shot through the body by a musket-ball. The faithful L'Hermite, who had shared Trouin's captivity and stood by his side in many a bloody fray, did all that the surgical skill and science of that day could do for the badly wounded lad, but from the first the case was hopeless. Carefully the boy was carried down the hill and placed on board the *Sanspareil*, Duguay himself superintending the removal, whilst Boscher stayed on shore to collect all the plunder possible, and to cover the re-embarkation of the landing-party.

For two days the little squadron lay moored in the bay, filling up with water and scouring the neighbourhood for wine and live-stock. All this time Duguay never left his brother's side, and when at last the cruel ball had done its worst, and the lifeless body of the brave boy alone remained to mourn over, Trouin weighed anchor and stood into the Port of Viana, a small town on the borders of Spain and Portugal; then with full military honours, and in the presence of all the military officials of the place, young Etienne Trouin was laid to his last rest.

At Viana Duguay Trouin stayed but two days, then,

heavy at heart, for he was both proud and fond of his brother, he again set sail and steered for Brest, meaning to relinquish the sea for a time. *En route* he fell in with and captured a large Dutch Indiaman, which attempted no resistance when overhauled by the *Sanspareil* and her little consort. Having paid off his crews, and handed over his prize to the Admiralty agent, Duguay Trouin set out for St. Malo, there to spend the winter with his mother and family.

Towards Duguay Trouin, Pontchartrain, the Minister of Marine, had a strong affection. The almost unvarying success that attended his cruises had resulted in very considerable profit to the Crown, and the minister was well aware that in securing Captain Trouin's service for the navy, he would be adding a pillar of strength to the maritime forces of the country.

The jealousy of the nobles, however, still stood in his way, and Pontchartrain saw himself obliged again to delay the inevitable promotion. As for Duguay Trouin he was as modest as he was brave, and never even in his memoirs, which were not intended for the public eye, does he allude to what all French Corsairs were then discussing—the unaccountable delay in promoting the Corsair captain to a position in his Majesty's fleet. The young Malouine was easily satisfied with flattering letters and swords of honor, and these were more easily granted by Louis XIV. than commissions in his very exclusively officered fleet.

Pontchartrain, in forwarding to Duguay Trouin the expression of his Majesty's high satisfaction at the capture of the Dutch Indiaman and at *l'action de rigueur sur la côte d'Espagne*, offered him the command of a little squadron consisting of the *Saint Jacques des Victoires*, 48, *Sanspareil*, 40, and *Leonore*, 16, with instruc-

tions to cruise off the coasts of Spain and destroy their Indian commerce.

On the 15th of March, 1698, the three vessels sailed from Brest, and before the week closed, during a heavy gale from the south-east, ran right into the middle of the Spanish merchant-fleet, numbering over thirty sail. The convoy was found to be under the escort of three Dutch men-of-war, the *Delft*, 54, *Houslaerdich*, 54, and *Nassau*, 38.

As the majority of the Spaniards were heavily armed, and carried powerful crews, Duguay Trouin hesitated for a moment before venturing to attack; indeed, the state of the weather forbade a naval engagement.

The whole fleet, under close-reefed topsails and furled courses, were beating off the land, and our Corsair contented himself for the moment with merely keeping them in sight. On the morrow two more sail were in view, and to Duguay Trouin's keen delight these proved to be the St. Malo Corsairs, the *Faluère*, 28, and *Aigle Noire*, 26. Signalling these ships to approach, Duguay Trouin desired all the captains to assemble on board the *Saint Jacques des Victoires* as soon as the weather moderated.

That evening the five captains met in the cabin of Duguay Trouin's ship, and decided on the plan of action. The *Saint Jacques des Victoires*, leading, was to pass under the stern of the *Houslaerdich* and, pouring in a broadside, was to pass on to the *Delft*, lash herself alongside the vessel, which flew a rear-admiral's flag, and carry her by boarding; the *Sanspareil*, following in the immediate wake of Duguay Trouin's ship; was to lay herself alongside the *Houslaerdich* directly the *Saint Jacques* had cleared her; the *Faluère* and *Aigle Noire* were to range up on either side of the *Nassau*;

whilst the *Leonore* was to devote herself exclusively to the merchant-men.

In this manner Duguay Trouin hoped not only to capture all three Dutch ships-of-war, but a considerable number of Spanish vessels too.

At midday on the 24th of March the weather was sufficiently calm to admit of the Frenchmen carrying their main-deck gun-ports open, and Duguay Trouin at once hoisted the signal for action. The Dutchmen, anxious to save their convoy, hove-to to windward of the fleet, and also cleared for battle, the *Houslaerdich* astern, the *Delft* in the centre, and the *Nassau* leading. On observing Duguay Trouin's signal, the *Faluère* and *Aigle Noire*, both extremely fast ships, pressed on past the Dutch line-of-battle ships and engaged the *Nassau*, one on either side.

The *Saint Jacques des Victoires* arriving within half-range of the *Houslaerdich*, poured in her agreed-upon broadside, meaning to put her helm up when clear of her and steer on after the *Delft*; but the *Houslaerdich*, divining her intention, at once put her helm down, and treated Duguay Trouin's ship to a broadside just as she was putting about, inflicting grievous damage to her top-hamper and also killing several of her crew. The *Delft* at the same time came up in the wind, and poured a second murderous discharge into the *Saint Jacques*.

The French plan was thus interfered with, but the gallant Boscher in the *Sanspareil* never hesitated a moment. Seeing the *Saint Jacques* engaged with the *Houslaerdich* and the *Delft* (as yet unattacked), he boldly laid his craft alongside the Dutch admiral's ship, and took up the position Duguay had reserved for himself—as gallant an action as ever performed at sea, for the

armament of the Dutchman consisted of fifty-six heavy guns against the forty lighter pieces of the *Sanspareil*, whilst the crew of the *Delft* was more than twice as numerous.

The *Saint Jacques*, crippled by the united fire of the two Dutch line-of-battle ships, nevertheless succeeded in pushing alongside the *Houslaerdich*, and the grappling-irons having caught in her main-chains, he threw himself with 120 selected men on her decks. And now ensued a murderous fight.

The Dutchman, surprised at the suddenness of the onslaught, had more than two-thirds of her crew below working the main-deck guns, and Duguay, with that ready wit which ever characterized him, stationed strong parties of small-arms men at the hatches, to prevent these gaining the upper deck, whilst he with picked swordsmen made himself master of the ship.

Whilst the fight raged above, below the Dutchmen poured broadside after broadside into the *Saint Jacques*; gun touching gun, port against port, hull grinding against hull, the murderous fight continued, until some Bretons, clambering through the open ports gained the lower deck of the *Houslaerdich*, and carried the fight into those regions.

There, in the well-nigh pitchy darkness of the lower deck, illumined here and there by the dimly burning battle-lanterns, the hellish fight raged on with fury.

Men naked to the waist, grimed with powder, stained with blood, fought with sponge and rammer, axe and bar; and as the vessels surged apart, the still heavy rollers would sweep between them, swirling up tons of water on the deck, and dashing eager combatants stunned and senseless against the smoking guns; and then the two ships once more would crash together, and the

noise of creaking timbers and falling spars would drown the roar of battle.

With disciplined rush, Duguay's swordsmen drove the Dutchmen from break of poop to break of fore-castle, until the hard-pressed enemy plunged through the open hatchway and added to the infernal scene below.

On deck the *Houslaerdich* was won, and the white flag flew from truck and peak; but below the fight continued long after the vessel had struck, for, in the din and turmoil of the blacky darkness, orders were difficult to convey and men loth to obey them. At last, cutting his own ship adrift, more light was thrown on to the lower deck, and by the united efforts of the French and Dutch officers, the French sailors were called upon deck and the prisoners ordered below. Then the Dutch officers descending carried on the work of disarmament, and when this was completed, busied themselves in removing all traces of the terrible strife from the blood-stained decks, and in plugging the many shot-holes through which the water was entering and flooding the hold.

Having left a strong prize-crew on the *Houslaerdich*, Duguay Trouin stood off to aid the gallant Boscher, who was hard-pressed by his powerful antagonist. Boscher, following his commander's lead, lashed the *Sanspareil* to the *Delft* and tried to carry the Dutch flagship by boarding; but a shell having fallen into a large tank containing cartridges for the guns on the poop, had caused a fearful explosion, destroying the whole of the after-part of the ship, carrying away the mizen-mast and killing over eighty men.

Boscher was forced to cast off his grappling-irons and stand away from the *Delft*, so as to employ all his men

in endeavouring to subdue the fire which threatened to reach his main powder-magazine, and to repair as well as he was able the shattered poop.

In this helpless condition he was exposed to the full fire of the *Delft*, and was unable to answer except by a few guns from the waist of the ship. Still no thought of surrender entered Boscher's mind; he knew full well that as soon as Duguay Trouin had captured his opponent, help would arrive, and he—brave man that he was—was content to wait until that help should come.

He had not to wait long. Passing the weather-quarter of the *Sanspareil*, Duguay Trouin shouted a few words of praise to the brave Boscher, and then prepared to throw the *Saint Jacques* on the broadside of the *Delft*. The Dutch admiral made no effort to withstand the shock beyond putting his helm hard down as the French ship approached, so that, instead of running up alongside and lashing the two vessels broadside to broadside, Duguay Trouin found his bowsprit crashing into the main rigging of the *Delft*, and he being raked from stem to stern by the Dutchman's powerful broadsides.

Not a moment was to be lost; already the Dutch admiral, seizing his advantage, had lashed the *Saint Jacques'* bowsprit to his own main-shrouds, and was encouraging his gunners to fire low into the hull of the French ship in order to sink her.

Duguay saw his danger, and at once calling on his men to follow him, dashed sword in hand over the fore-castle-head into the Dutch ship. A terrible hand-to-hand fight ensued. Three times did Duguay Trouin lead his men to the assault, three times were they driven back with heavy loss to their own ship. At last, seeing the hopelessness of carrying on the fight under such

conditions, Duguay cut his ship adrift, and bore off from the enemy to récupérer his crew and repair damages.

But he was by no means prepared to relinquish the fight. Seeing that the French flag was flying from the *Nassau's* mast-head, he signalled to the *Faluère* to engage the *Delft*.

Without a moment's hesitation the little craft ranged up, and commenced to exchange broadsides with her formidable antagonist; overpowered by the superior weight of metal, the frigate would most undoubtedly have been sunk, had not Duguay Trouin once more borne down on the flagship, and reopened fire. The crew of the *Saint Jacques des Victoires*, refreshed by half an hour's respite and a liberal ration of *eau-de-vie*, were ready for a fresh attempt at boarding, and in this their fourth attack, they were aided by fifty men from the *Faluère*, who, unfatigued by previous struggles, bore a great share in deciding the day.

This time Duguay laid his ship alongside the *Delft* and lashed the *Saint Jacques* to her chains. At the same moment, the *Faluère*, in the most spirited manner, came up on the opposite side and threw her crew on to the Dutchman's decks. Gallantly as the enemy fought, they were now clearly outmatched, and the admiral, seeing he could expect no aid from his consorts, at last consented to haul down his flag.

Proud must have been the Malouine Corsair that day. Three men-of-war and twelve merchant-vessels of heavy tonnage were the trophies of that gallant fight, in which an admiral had handed over his sword to a Corsair. But though as the sun went down the struggle with man ceased, the battle with the elements was about to commence.

The wind, which had dropped during the day, now increased to a heavy gale, and the sea, which had moderated its violence during the height of the action, now rolled in almost resistless billows from the Atlantic. The frigates and the merchantmen were alone uninjured in the fleet; and Duguay Trouin signalled the *Faluère*, *Aigle Noire*, and *Leonore*, to escort the *Nassau* and twelve merchant-vessels, to Port Louis with all speed, whilst he and the *Sanspareil*, in company with the *Delft* and *Houslaerdich*, would heave-to until the gale abated.

Truly the position of these four vessels was a perilous one; little there was to choose between prize and victor, all were grievously wounded in their top-hamper, all had been hulled in many places, all were short-handed, and all were encumbered with several hundred wounded. In spite of the most strenuous efforts of whole and wounded, crew and prisoners, the water gained on the pumps, and if on the following day the weather had not abated, there is no doubt all would have foundered.

Fortunately they were near the coast, and the *Leonore*, standing in to land, signalled their perilous position, and then returned to offer what help she was able. She was speedily followed by a whole fleet of *chasse-marées*, and by the sturdy efforts of these will-seamen the leaks were got under, and the four crippled men-of-war entered Port Louis in safety. As may be supposed, Duguay's Trouin's reception was of the warmest, and he, with the modest courtesy of the French sailor, insisted that the honor of the day equally belonged to the brave Boscher, and the unfortunate admiral whom the fortune of war had deserted.

On the news of the victory reaching Versailles, the king gave instructions that Duguay Trouin was to re-

pair to the capital, in company with the Dutch admiral, the Baron von Wassenaër. The reception of the vanquished admiral was as considerate and courteous as that accorded to the Corsair captain was warm and distinguished, and Duguay Trouin gained not a little in public estimation by the very flattering encomiums passed on his gallantry and seamanship by the captive admiral. This time professional jealousy was stilled, and the king, despite the objections of some few who even yet maintained that the king's uniform should be reserved for the nobility, offered the Malouine Corsair the rank of commander (*capitaine de frégate*) in his navy.

The appointment was proudly accepted, and with it Duguay Trouin passed from the ranks of the Corsairs to that of the navy of France. His deeds when in the king's service were no less brilliant than—nay, they even excelled—those performed when yet but a Corsair, but with them we shall only briefly deal. He commanded single ships and squadrons and fleets, and in all his commands he showed the same modesty of demeanor, gallantry, and readiness of resource that characterized the Corsair captain.

At the close of the Peace of Ryswick, which lasted from the date of his entering the French navy until the year 1701, he was appointed commander of the line-of-battle ship, the *Dauphine*, commanded by the Comte de Hautfort, a disciplinarian and aristocrat of the bluest blood. This was doubtless with a view of accustoming the young officer to the regulations on board king's ships, for at the expiration of the year (1702) he was placed in command of a squadron of light frigates, with instructions to cruise between the Orkneys and Spitzbergen. Several small prizes were captured and safely

convoyed to France, but a large Dutchman which surrendered after an obstinate fight, was driven ashore and lost on the coast of Scotland, and Duguay Trouin and his two consorts narrowly escaped this fate.

The following year he again was placed in command of a squadron for a similar purpose, and was fortunate enough in the single month of May, 1703, to capture six English prizes, four of which were safely taken into Brest. Early in July he ran narrow escape of capture at the hands of a fleet of fifteen Dutch men-of-war; but after a running fight of some hours, he succeeded in shaking off his pursuers, thanks to the superior sailing powers of his ships. In the same month, when off Spitzbergen, he captured some Dutch whalers who were ransomed for a considerable sum, and on his homeward voyage he captured a large English merchantman bound from the West Indies with sugar.

The next year Duguay Trouin was furnished with a more powerful squadron, and directed to cruise in the Channel. The season open inauspiciously, for the sloop *Mouche* belonging to his squadron was captured by the English; but the following day its loss was amply revenged, for, after a brilliant defence, the *Coventry*, 50, fell into his hands, and whilst escorting her to Brest, his consorts and himself succeeded in taking twelve English and Dutch coasting-craft, and in beating off a very determined attack on the part of the *Revenge*, 60, and the *Falmouth*, 54, who attempted to retake the *Coventry*.

In the year 1705, again cruising in the Channel, Duguay Trouin had a sharp engagement with two English ships-of-war, the *Elizabeth* and *Chatham*; the former, owing to superior force was forced to surrender, the latter, one of the smartest vessels in the navy, escaped.

Once more on his homeward voyage he was fortunate enough to add to his prizes; in this instance a powerful Dutch privateer, mounting forty-two guns, which, after a gallant struggle against overwhelming odds, was forced to surrender. The cruise, however, was marred by the death of Nicolas Trouin, Duguay's youngest brother, a promising young man commanding the Corsair *Valeur*. In the engagement with the Dutchman, Nicolas received a mortal wound, to which he succumbed two days after reaching Brest.

In the month of July, when continuing his cruise in the Channel, Duguay narrowly escaped capture at the hands of an English fleet of twenty-one sail; then, finding the seas near home too well patrolled, he sailed south to the coast of Spain, where better fortune awaited him.

Three Dutch East Indiamen, laden with cocoa, spices, and silver, two English armed merchantmen, mounting thirty-two and twenty-eight guns, bound from the Levant to Bristol, and a fine English vessel of 500 tons, carrying powder to the West Indies, all fell into his hands; and finally, in rounding Cape Finisterre, a fourth English ship was captured. All these prizes were safely carried into Brest, where Duguay Trouin paid off his crews and busied himself in the fitting-out a squadron for the next year's cruise.

Among the promotions made on the occasion of the new year (1706), the king was pleased to include Duguay Trouin, who was raised to the rank of post-captain (*capitaine de vaisseau*). At the same time he was nominated to the command of a squadron, with instructions to proceed to Cadiz and afford every assistance to the governor, the Marquis de Valdacagnas. On his way thither he fell in with and captured an English

privateer, the *Marlborough*, and a few days later attacked a convoy of thirty sail escorted by six Portuguese men-of-war; by these he was grievously maltreated, and had to return to Port Louis for refit.

Once more sailing for Cadiz, Duguay Trouin on his arrival endeavoured to afford the governor every assistance; but the pompous Spaniard rejected all advice, and behaved most insolently to the French officers. On Duguay remonstrating, he was thrown into prison; but the intervention of the ambassador not only procured his release, but also the removal of the ill-conditioned governor. Duguay Trouin was then instructed to return to Brest with his squadron, as all fear of Portugal acting with a fleet against Cadiz was at an end.

On his homeward voyage, Trouin ran into a convoy consisting of fifteen English merchantmen escorted by a 36-gun frigate, the *Gaspard*. After an encounter lasting two hours the *Gaspard* struck, and in the meantime Duguay's consorts had made so good use of their time that twelve out of the fifteen merchantmen had been manned with prize-crews. On reaching Brest with his thirteen prizes, Duguay Trouin was pleased to receive letters from the minister announcing the king's high appreciation of his services at Cadiz, and summoning him at the same time to Versailles, there to be invested with the accolade of the Order of St. Louis, as a reward for his past brilliant services.

Duguay Trouin was not allowed to remain long idle. No sooner had his ships filled with water and shipped fresh stores, than he was ordered off with a squadron of six vessels to cruise off the Portuguese coast. Here five more English merchantmen, laden with sugar and tobacco, fell into his hands, and on convoying them to Brest, he was instructed to join the squadron under

the Count de Forbin, and cruise under his orders, with a view of intercepting a large convoy of munitions of war about to sail from England to Portugal.

On the 24th of October, 1707, a convoy, escorted by a strong squadron of ships-of-war was sighted, and Duguay Trouin with his usual ardour pressed on to attack; his movements, however, were checked by signal from Forbin who, with the true aristocrat's jealousy, showed himself as morbidly sensitive to Duguay Trouin's honours as he had previously with regard to Jean Bart. Despite Forbin's conduct, a general engagement ensued, and thanks to Trouin's courage and dexterity—qualities generously recognized by the captured English captains, though studiously ignored by Forbin both in his despatches and in his memoirs—three English men-of-war, the *Cumberland*, *Chester*, and *Royal Oak*, were captured, and one, the *Devonshire*, was sunk in addition; a number of merchant-vessels composing the convoy were also taken.

Forbin's idiosyncrasies were well known at court, and Pontchartrain at once addressed a letter to Duguay Trouin according him a pension of a thousand livres a year. In acknowledging this, and tendering his gracious thanks to the king, Duguay Trouin solicited permission to proceed to Versailles, and there enlist the king's protection for the commanders and men who had fought so bravely under him. This was granted, and Duguay had the satisfaction of seeing all his subordinate captains promoted, and one of his petty officers granted a gold medal. How unlike was this conduct to that of Forbin!

On his return from his successful cruise, Duguay Trouin spent the winter in superintending the fitting-out of a powerful squadron of eight vessels, with which he intended to intercept the Portuguese Brazilian fleet.

The produce of the South American colonies left the shores of Brazil annually about the month of July, 1708, under a strong escort, which, owing to the activity displayed by the French Corsairs since the commencement of the war, generally received a considerable reinforcement at the Azores. Duguay Trouin's recent successes strengthened the confidence of his townsmen, and his brother, Barbinais de la Trouin, had no difficulty in forming a syndicate of Breton merchants to provide the funds for the equipment of the ships that the king had entrusted to the Malouine captain. It was the month of August before all preparations were complete, and the eight well-found ships sailed from Brest.

On nearing the Azores, Duguay Trouin learnt that a squadron of seven large ships-of-war were there awaiting the arrival of the Brazilian merchant-fleet, and he determined therefore to cruise to the eastward of the islands until he could assure himself of the rich booty. Every day's delay, however, worked against the success of the scheme. The voyage from Brest to the Azores had been long and arduous, owing to heavy weather and bad winds, and both provisions and water commenced to run low, Duguay Trouin's captains therefore urged upon him the advisability of attacking the ships-of-war in the harbor, seizing them, and thus lessening the difficulties that would otherwise attend the capture of the merchant-fleet, and, in addition to this undoubted advantage, he would be able to fill up with live-stock and water before the arrival of the fleet from the Brazils.

Unfortunately for the success of his expedition, Duguay Trouin refused until it was too late to agree to this proposal, and when at last he consented and bore up for Fayal, the Portuguese men-of-war were no longer

in the harbor. Still the want of water necessitated a landing, and Duguay Trouin, after a sharp engagement with the land-forts; disembarked a strong body of seamen and small-arms men, and completely defeated the garrison.

Large quantities of wine, fruit, corn, and live-stock were seized, fifteen standards and 100 pieces of cannon captured, and the ships filled up with water. From prisoners the French commander learnt that the Portuguese men-of-war had sailed for Lisbon, and that the Brazilian fleet had not yet touched at the islands. The fine season was now drawing to an end; a succession of violent gales compelling Duguay Trouin to re-embark and give the islands a wide berth. During these storms his squadron became scattered, many of the vessels suffered severely and were forced to run for France, and he himself with the two vessels that remained in his company were driven far to the northward.

Ere he could again make the islands, the Brazilian fleet had succeeded in gaining the Tagus in safety, and Trouin, disappointed of his great prize, returned to Brest with three Dutch merchant-ships and an English vessel laden with iron.

The failure of his expedition during the preceding year caused the merchants of St. Malo to look with no very favourable eye on Duguay Trouin's proposal to equip a second squadron for the same purpose, and the brave Malouine found himself compelled to limit his cruise to the west coast of Ireland, off which with four vessels he took his station. In the month of March, 1709, he encountered a large English convoy under escort of three English men-of-war; after a heavy engagement, in which he lost one of his own ships, but

beat off the English vessels, Duguay found himself in possession of five large merchantment laden with tobacco and other American produce. After escorting his prizes to Brest and making good his defects, Duguay Trouin once more sailed for the entrance to the Channel, and once more his good fortune did not desert him.

After a running engagement of sixteen hours he came up to and boarded the *Bristol*, 60. The fight was long and obstinate, and the victory, though it undoubtedly remained with Trouin, was dearly purchased; not only did his losses amount to two officers and eighty men killed, but shortly after surrendering, the *Bristol* foundered with her prize-crew, and, as if to add to his misfortunes, an English squadron hove in sight, which at once engaged the French ships.

These, all crippled as they were with their recent fight with the *Bristol*, were neither in a condition to prolong the engagement nor to fly. Night fortunately put an end to the pursuit, and Duguay Trouin was able to reach Brest in safety; his consort, the *Gloire*, less happy, fell into the hands of the English. Before reaching harbour Trouin managed to pick up a fine English armed-merchantman of 500 tons, which, with his five previous prizes, constituted a fair profit for that year's cruise.

On reaching France he was further honored by the king, by the receipt of a letter granting to him and to his elder brother, Barbinais Trouin, letters of nobility and permission to bear arms. The letter conferring these rights, relate succinctly all Trouin's principal actions, and further bear official witness to the fact that, since he had embarked on his career as a Corsair, he had convoyed to the ports of France more than 300 merchantships and twenty vessels-of-war or armed privateers!

In the succeeding year 1710 Trouin once more selected

the entrance to the Channel as his cruising-ground, and with his little squadron of five vessels made several prizes, the most important being the *Gloucester*, a new man-of-war mounting sixty-six guns. A violent attack of dysentery, however, compelled him to leave the squadron and proceed homewards, where he arrived more dead than alive.

Months elapsed ere he recovered his health sufficiently to warrant his again proceeding to sea, and these months were spent by him in evolving a project which should at once raise him above the ordinary run of Corsair heroes, whose visions of conquest were limited by the destruction of an enemy's commerce and the occasional capture of a ship-of-war.

His project, however, required considerable expenditure, and though, if successful, it would result in conferring benefit on the State, the condition of the National Exchequer was such that the Minister of Marine was reluctantly compelled to withhold State assistance from the enterprise. The capture of the Brazilian fleet had, as we have seen, been previously contemplated by Duguay Trouin, and his failure to achieve the object had rankled considerably in his mind; he now determined to go further, and by storming Rio Janeiro reap at the fountain-head the riches of Portugal's richest possessions.

The scheme, though daring, seemed feasible enough; Duguay Trouin, at any rate, succeeded in convincing many of the wealthiest merchants of Brittany of its practicability, so that, when he proceeded to Versailles to solicit State countenance if not pecuniary support, he was in a position to assure the Minister of Marine that the greater part of the necessary funds had been already subscribed or guaranteed.

A similar attempt had been made by a Monsieur Du Clerc with five vessels-of-war and 1000 troops, but this had been an ignominious failure. Little information was obtainable as to the cause of Du Clerc's defeat, but it was generally supposed that he had first of all undertaken the expedition with too small a force, and secondly, that he had allowed himself to be entrapped into negotiations whilst the Portuguese were strengthening their defences and bringing up reinforcements, so that when at last he delivered his attack, he was opposed by far stronger forces than he would have found had he not been beguiled into delay. Du Clerc's disaster necessarily caused many people to throw cold water over Duguay Trouin's scheme.

Nothing daunted, however, by the prophets of evil, the brave Malouine set off for Versailles, and there laid all his plans before Pontchartrain. He had previously secured the support of M. Gallet de Coulanges, Comptroller of the King's Household, of M. Beauvais Lefer, and his cousin M. Saudre-Lefer, M. Belle Isle-Pepin, M. Epine Danycan, M. Nicolas Chapdelaine, M. Langrolé-Colin, and his own brother, Barbinais Trouin, who between them guaranteed the necessary funds, and in the face of this guarantee M. Pontchartrain submitted the scheme first to the Count of Toulouse, Lord High Admiral of France, who accorded it his warmest support, and then to the king, who also considered it favorably.

The Minister of Marine was instructed to afford every assistance, and steps were at once taken to fit out a force which should put the expedition beyond all chance of failure.

Not only was a powerful fleet requisite but a strong land-force was also necessary, and in the equipment of these Trouin now busied himself. It was June before

all preparations were completed and the armament ready to set sail. The utmost secrecy had been observed, and vessels commissioned at every port from Port Louis to Dunkirk, for it was feared that, were the English to suspect the real destination of this large number of vessels it was rumored were being prepared, the expedition would be attacked in mid-ocean, and the garrison of Rio Janeiro warned of the impending danger.

At last the whole force rendezvoused off the Cape de Verdes, and a proud command indeed was it for a post-captain to be entrusted with—a captain be it minded who boasted of no courtly influence, but had risen from the despised ranks of a Corsair crew.

The squadron consisted of seven line-of-battle ships, the *Lys*, 74, flying Duguay Trouin's flag; the *Magnanime*, 74, Chevalier de Courserac; *Achille*, 66, Chevalier de Beauve; *Brilliant*, 66, Chevalier de Goyon; *Glorieuse*, 66, M. de la Jaille; *Fidèle*, 66, M. de la Moinerie-Miniac; *Mars*, 56, M. de la Cite Danycan: eight frigates, *Argonaut*, 46, le Chevalier du Bois de la Motte; *Aigle*, 40, M. de la Mar; *Chancelier*, 40, M. Durocher Danycan; *Bellone*, 36, M. de Kerguelin; *Amazon*, 36, M. du Chesnay le Fer; *Glorieuse*, 36, M. de la Perche; *Astrée*, 22, M. de Rogou; *Concorde*, 20, M. de Pradel Daniel, and the *Françoise* and *Patient* bombships.

In addition to their own armament and crews these vessels carried a strong detachment of the king's troops, both artillery and infantry, making up a total of 738 guns, six mortars, and 5684 men.

On the 6th July the expedition, having escaped the English fleet which had endeavored to intercept the Brest detachment, left St. Vincent, and on the 19th August sighted Ascension. Standing to the westward it

again rendezvoused at Bahia on the 27th of the same month.

Having filled up with water, Trouin bore up for Rio Janeiro, which he sighted on the 11th September; the wind being favourable, the hardy Malouine determined to stand at once into the harbour, taking no notice of the works at the entrance, and led by the *Magnanime*, the commander of which knew the port, the fleet crowding on all sail dashed through the narrow outlet, not a mile across, under a terrible fire from the astonished Portuguese, who little anticipated such a reckless proceeding, and who were prepared for a lengthy bombardment from the open sea rather than from the inner harbour.

Handled in the most masterly way the *Magnanime* swept through the entrance without firing a shot, then exchanging broadsides as she passed with four Portuguese line-of-battle ships moored just inside the harbour, brought up beyond the range of the defensive works opposite the town itself.

Each vessel as it passed received the fire not only of the forts at the mouth of the harbour and of the seven ships of war moored just inside it, but also of the forts Notre-Dame-de-bon-voyage, Villegagnon, Saint Alousi, de la Misericorde and Chevres, mounting on the aggregate over 200 guns.

Owing to the advent of an English frigate, which had been despatched by Queen Anne to warn the Portuguese Governor of the probable destination of Duguay Trouin's squadron, the works had been strengthened, more guns mounted, and the garrison considerably reinforced. When once inside the harbour Duguay Trouin still had a difficult task before him; the number of

troops opposed to him exceeded 13,000 men, and these too were flushed with the victory obtained over Du Clerc's expedition.

The French commander felt that he must act with promptitude and yet with caution. On the 13th September a strong party under the Chevalier de Goyon stormed and seized the Chevres fort, and turned its guns upon the city. At nightfall 3300 men were disembarked on the mainland and formed into three brigades under the Chevaliers de Goyon, de Courserac, and de Beauve, and at once commenced the siege of the city, erecting batteries which caused considerable damage to the works on the surrounding hills, and so galled the enemy that when on the 21st of September Duguay Trouin determined to assault the town, he was met by an escaped prisoner, one of Du Clerc's aides-de-camp, who informed him that the place had been evacuated during the night.

One by one the sea-forts also surrendered, and all the defensive works were at once occupied by the French so as to guard against any attempt at surprise on the part of the Portuguese, who it was known were collecting forces in the interior. Negotiations in the meantime were opened with Don Castro Morais, the Governor-General of Brazil, and finally a treaty was signed, Duguay Trouin agreeing to evacuate the place upon payment of 600,000 crusados, 5000 cases of sugar, and all the Portuguese and English ships in the harbour.

These terms having been complied with, the French squadron set sail for Europe on the 13th November, just two months after its gallant entry into the bay.

From this time, however, misfortune never ceased

to attend the expedition; a series of head-winds and heavy gales caused the vessels to separate, and Duguay Trouin signalled each to steer her own course homeward. Off the Azores the *Lys* again found herself in company with the *Amazone*, *Argonaut*, *Aigle*, *Bellone*, and *Brilliant*, all of which had suffered severely and were straining heavily from the bad weather. Keeping together to avoid the risk of capture from the English frigates, these vessels reached Brest on the 6th of February, 1712; on the following day the *Achille* and *Glorieux* also arrived. About the same date the frigates *Chancelier* and *Glorieuse* and the bombships *Françoise* and *Patient* made the harbour of St. Malo, and a few days later the *Mars* under jury-masts was helped into Port Louis; these were all that returned.

The *Magnanime*, 74, *Fidele*, 66, *Aigle*, 40, *Concorde*, 22, and a fine Portuguese prize, *Notre Dame de l'Incarnation*, were never heard of more, and what added to the bitterness of their loss was the fact that the greater part of the treasure, amounting to half a million crusados and several hundred cases of sugar, were on M. de Courserac's unfortunate ship the *Magnanime*. In spite of these heavy losses, not only did the officers and men of the expedition realize handsome sums in loot and prize-money, but the guarantors gained a profit amounting to 92 per cent. upon their outlay.

It was subsequently ascertained that the Portuguese estimated their losses, irrespective of the four men-of-war and sixty merchant-ships captured or destroyed, at about two million sterling.

Dark hints were thrown out at the vast sums made by pillage, both by officers and men, and though Louis XIV. accorded the brave Trouin a warm welcome and

bestowed on him a pension of two thousand livres a year, he was unwilling, in face of the popular feeling, to advance him to the rank of commodore, a reward barely commensurate with the services rendered.

By the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Duguay Trouin was once more put on the shelf, and he now retired to his pretty little cottage la Haute-Fleurie, overlooking the lovely valley of the Rance, where he busied himself in writing his memoirs. From the garden he had a full view of the rock-studded passage leading past the island of Cézembre to the rough reef of the Minquiers, up which in his younger days he had beat with many a hard-won prize; there, surrounded by Malouine friends, the brave Corsair—for his heart was still with the little craft in which he gained his first distinctions—would fight his battles once again, and draw up plans for the development of the colonial grandeur of France and the destruction of English commerce.

He still looked forward to further employment, for when the bitter partisanship which enveloped the discussion of the Rio Janeiro treaty had somewhat modified, full justice was done to the courage and energy he had displayed. The foundering of the *Magnanime* and loss of treasure could not be laid to his charge, and as the firms who equipped the expedition rallied round their brave commander, public opinion soon followed suit.

At intervals Duguay Trouin would visit Versailles, to assure the monarch of his fidelity and anxiety to serve again, and he had the satisfaction of receiving at the hands of Louis XIV., the month previous to his death (1715), the commission of Commodore in the French fleet. He was then called to the Board of Council

of the French East India Company, and in this position he was enabled to give the new king and his advisers sound practical advice, but with the capture of Rio Janeiro Duguay Trouin's active career closed.

He gradually rose in the navy list, receiving the rank of rear-admiral and the knight commandership of the Order of St. Louis in the year 1728, and three years later he hoisted his flag in command of the Mediterranean fleet. This was but a peaceful cruise, though at one time it was anticipated that the brave Malouine might have rough work cut out for him.

The pirates in that sea interfered much with European commerce, and Duguay Trouin was entrusted with the task of compelling the Beys of Algiers and of Tunis to keep their subjects in order; fortunately, the firm attitude adopted by the French admiral had the desired effect, and after a cruise of some months, and showing the white flag in the principal ports of the Mediterranean, Duguay Trouin returned home and paid off his fleet at Toulon.

His next employment was as naval commandant of Brest, with the rank of lieutenant-general of the king's navies; and it was whilst holding this appointment that he was overtaken by the final stages of a disease from which he had long suffered. By the advice of local physicians he was moved by slow stages to Paris, in the hopes that the famous surgeons of the capital might ease him of his malady. Their efforts were in vain, and the brave admiral, feeling his end approaching, addressed a touching letter to Cardinal Fleury, in which he announced his approaching end and solicited from the king some pecuniary help for his family, who had benefited but little from his exploits.

The cardinal's answer removed all causes of anxiety from the mind of the dying man, who then, turning to religion for its last consolations, passed away peacefully and without pain on the 27th of September, 1736.

Without rising to the heights of Tourville or Duguay, Duguay Trouin throughout his career showed all the tributes of a good sailor. He was not merely daring in action, but he had the happy knack of inflaming his crew with his own valour; he was equally steadfast under adversity, and whether we see him navigating the Channel in the open boat in which he escaped from Plymouth; or working the sinking *Saint Jacques des Victoires*, into Port Louis after his victory over the Dutch admiral Von Wassenaër; or pressing past the batteries of Rio Janeiro without firing a shot; or boarding an English line-of-battle ship with his Corsair crew,—we cannot withhold an admiration which the more carefully worked out combinations of greater admirals fail to evoke.

Professional jealousy thwarted him at every turn, Nesmond and Forbin, under whose command he sailed, were both aristocrats, and whilst the one, as we saw, signalled the Corsair captain to abstain from pressing an advantage gained over an English ship, the other in his despatches arrogated to himself captures really made by Duguay Trouin's own vessel.

Despite the disadvantages of lowly birth, the jealous hatred of the blue-blooded naval officers, Duguay Trouin triumphed over every obstacle. Early in life he gained the love and admiration of his fellow-townsmen, and ere he had attained middle age, he was high in favour with his king. His name still lives, not merely enshrined in the hearts of Breton sailors or in musty volumes of contemporary historians, or even on the

indifferent statues raised in various places to his honour, but as he would have it live, in the impersonal personality of a French man-of-war, carrying into distant waters the living memory of one of France's bravest sailors and one of England's bravest foes.

CHAPTER V

François Thurot of Boulogne—1727-1760



JEAN BART, with Corsair blood flowing in his veins, was born in Dunkirk, and his infant lullaby was the thunder of the English cannon besieging that oft-captured town. Duguay Trouin, the son of seafaring people, was wont as a lad to bask on the mole at St. Malo and weave dreams of his own future from the tales he had heard from his father's men of their encounters with the hated English. Jacques Cassard in like manner imbibed the love of his future profession on the quays at Nantes—quays now named in his honour. But François Thurot was born in the vine-clad valleys of Burgundy, and none around him were in any way connected with the marine.

It was in the now well-known town of Nuits, better known perhaps by the excellence of its wines rather than by the beauty of its situation, that on the night of the 21st July, 1727, the wife of the worthy post-master presented her husband with his first-born son.

At that time, in addition to his official calling, François Thurot the elder, cultivated his family acres, and made a comfortable living out of the good wine he sold; but the doctrines of Malthus had not in those days obtained a hold on the population of France, and children came to the young couple with annual precision,

and alas! with annual precision came also a long succession of bad vintages. The two combined served to plunge the good postmaster into pecuniary embarrassments, and when in 1735 his office became vacant and his wife a widow, little was left for the support of his family.

Kind friends came to the front and offered to relieve the mother of the education of her eldest son; but he, more than probably a spoiled child, cared little for the career these friends had marked out for him. The first idea was to make him a priest, and for some few years he pursued his education at a Jesuit college in Dijon, but it was soon evident that the young Thurot was little fitted for the "frock"; his wild untamable disposition grated on the reverend fathers, and his mother was fain to think of more secular employment. On leaving the Jesuit college, he was apprenticed to a worthy surgeon of the same town, and showed some interest in this direction.

Unfortunately the pecuniary circumstances of his mother became more and more embarrassed, and Thurot, overwhelmed with grief at her position and willing to sacrifice all for his mother, was tempted to purloin some valuables belonging to his aunt, and selling them handed the money thus obtained to the widow, and then knowing that discovery was inevitable, he quitted Dijon to seek his living as best he might.

The gallant deeds and brilliant successes of Jean Bart and Duguay Trouin had penetrated even to the peaceful valleys of Burgundy; and Thurot, albeit that he had never seen the sea, determined on following the calling which had brought fame and riches to so many.

He had but one aim in view: to put as great a distance as possible between himself and Dijon, and to hide his early history from every eye. In both of these

he was successful. Paris offered but slight temptations to one with such an empty purse, and pushing through the capital, Thurot never stayed his steps until he found himself at Dunkirk.

Here, his evident ignorance of the sea stood in the way of his employment. Tall and well-grown for his age, he was too old to be taken as a *mousse*—these urchins usually began their career at the age of eleven or twelve—and for some days the forlorn landsman saw his offers of service scouted on every side.

At last a chance opportunity gave him the necessary opening. Hanging about the doors of cabarets frequented by the wild Corsairs of Dunkirk, Thurot happened to be present when a drunken brawl terminated in an open fight; knives were drawn and lives were threatened, and ere the *patron* of the cabaret had cleared his premises of the shouting, fighting crowd, two of the number were lying on the floor, their life-blood welling from gaping wounds.

Pushing his way through the gesticulating throng, Thurot entered the darkened room, and with the air of a practised hand, knelt by the side of the wounded men. One he immediately saw was past all hope, but the other might be saved by prompt aid, and calling for linen and water, the future Corsair busied himself in staunching and binding up the bleeding wounds.

The cool, methodical air with which the lad removed the wounded man's clothes and bathed his hurts, the skilful manner in which he applied the bandages, and the authoritative way in which he demanded the man's address, and, having seen him carried to his humble rooms, enjoined perfect quiet, forbidding the entrance of any of his messmates, struck more than one of the rough Corsairs, who witnessed the scene. On the morrow the

patient was better, and though Thurot still enjoined absolute quiet, he himself was ready enough to explain as much of his past as he chose should be known, as well as all his aspirations for the future.

Now had his opportunity come. The wounded man was mate of a small lugger which had made some name as a Corsair in the Straits of Dover, and he promised to interest himself for the young Thurot. Nay more, he assured the lad that such a skilful surgeon as he would never lack employment, for a recent ordinance of the king laid down that every craft to which letters of marque were issued, should bear on her rolls one *chirurgien*. What stamp of man it was expected would ship on board a lugger of twenty tons in the capacity of surgeon it is hard to say, still the fact remains that the Government of France, ever solicitous for the welfare of those engaged in the destruction of English commerce, had determined that no Corsair should put to sea without a doctor to attend to the sick and wounded of her crew.

Thurot's qualifications, backed up as they were by the recommendations of his patient, soon secured for him the looked-for employment, and early in 1744 we find him embarked as surgeon on board the Corsair *Cerf Volant*, a small lugger carrying four 4-pounders, and a crew of twenty-eight men.

Fortune, however, was against the youth, for in this first cruise his craft was captured after a sharp resistance by an English cruiser, and carried a prize into Dover. Still Dame Fortune was not altogether unkind to our hero, for as the English officer deputed to work the prize into harbour stepped on the *Cerf Volant's* decks, Thurot was seen busy with the wounded men, and as the English cruiser carried no doctor, the young

man was at once transhipped to the king's vessel to perform the same work of charity to the wounded English seamen; and so it came about that when the *Cerf Volant's* crew were lodged in watch and ward at Dover, Thurot was allowed out on his *parole*.

The hours of his captivity dragged wearily enough we may be sure; but the lad had more in him than the average Corsair, and he determined that every hour should be well employed. Thanks to the kindly intercession of the captain of the cruiser that had captured the *Cerf Volant*, Thurot obtained permission to attend his own wounded. There, in the hospital attached to the prison, he was thrown into daily contact with the English surgeons, who, hearing the lad's history, were willing enough to aid him in his self-imposed duties, and to impart to him as much surgical knowledge as he chose to learn.

But Thurot was by no means content to look forward to no higher career than that of surgeon of a Corsair or, may be, even of a king's ship; he was determined to enter the combatant ranks, and every moment that he could spare from the hospital was devoted to a study of navigation, of the charts of the Channel, and of the English language. Weeks rolled on, and still no hope of release; at every fresh exchange of prisoners, the Corsair crew found themselves still unfriended.

It was those in the king's service who were first selected for exchange; privateers' men were left to make their own arrangements for escape, unless, as too rarely happened, high State influence could be brought to bear in their favour. Thurot was little inclined to rest quietly at Dover until a general peace should release all prisoners, and he determined on making an effort to secure his own liberty.

The question of prisoners of war was just then exciting much attention. The Marquis de Belle-isle had been despatched on a mission from Versailles to the Courts of the Emperor Charles (then in Bavaria), and thence to Frederick in Silesia. On his return trip to France, the marquis had been seized when passing through Hanover, and, despite his own personal remonstrances and the indignant protests of the French Government, had been carried a prisoner to London.

The French insisted that the sacred person of an ambassador was free from capture; the English, on the other hand, maintained that Belle-isle, although an ambassador, should have avoided entering Hanover, then subject to the English crown; that had a passage through the electorate been necessary for his return to France, he should have applied to the Court of St. James's for a safe-conduct, and that by voluntarily entering the enemy's territory, he voluntarily placed himself in that enemy's power. Matters were eventually arranged, and Belle-isle permitted to return to France.

During the ambassador's sojourn in London, Thurot, obtaining leave from the commandant at Dover, contrived to gain access to the marquis, and implored him to exert his influence to obtain the release of the many thousand Corsairs now prisoners in English ports.

As Thurot very justly pointed out, these men were fighting France's battles, and playing France's game as effectually as any of the seamen belonging to the king's navy. Many of the vessels worked by these Corsairs were the king's own ships, and one-tenth of the sums realized by their prizes went into the king's coffers. Belle-isle, struck by the lad's arguments, promised to bring the matter before the Minister of Marine; more he could not do, his instructions as to obtaining the release

of prisoners at that moment referred only to soldiers and sailors of the king's forces.

Thurot, disheartened, returned to Dover, and once more threw himself heart and soul into the pursuit of those studies which were destined to gain him pre-eminence in his calling. Days passed, and yet no sign that the Marquis of Belle-isle had made representations to Versailles regarding the French Corsairs now prisoners in English jails, and Thurot, despairing of obtaining freedom by legitimate means, determined on making one bold bid for escape.

He decided to take advantage of the bustle attendant on Belle-isle's departure for France: a departure attended with the ceremonial usually bestowed on ambassadors by the town of Dover, which was wont on these occasions to deck itself in holiday array, and cause the representatives of Foreign Powers to be escorted to the craft destined to convey them across the Channel, by the military and municipal authorities, and to be wafted on their journey by the thunder of the Castle guns.

England, willing to atone for the rude circumstances connected with Belle-isle's capture, was ready to give as much *éclat* as possible to his embarkation; troops were drawn up on the old pier, and amidst the rattle of arms and the booming of cannon, the ambassador to the Courts of Bavaria and of Brandenburg, stepped on to the English ship-of-war destined to convey him to Calais. And Thurot saw the craft cast off her hawsers, warp out beyond the jetty, and then under a crowd of canvas press on before a strong northerly breeze to the French coast.

That night, warily evading the ever-watchful sentries, Thurot found his way down to the jetty, and leaping

on board a small dingey attached to a fishing-lugger, he silently sculled her outside the harbor; then, feeling the influence of the northerly breeze, he rigged up his shirt into a temporary sail, and once more taking to the oars steered by the stars his southerly course. As dawn broke the little boat was descried by some Calais fishermen, and Thurot, exhausted with his long pull, was taken more dead than alive on board their hospitable craft.

The noise of his escape from a British prison soon spread through the French town, and, coming to the ears of the Marquis of Belle-isle, caused the ambassador to command that the brave lad should be led into his presence. There he was at once recognized as the unsuccessful suitor of London, and Belle-isle, struck by the youth's determination, promised that he would never lose sight of him. He kept his word with greater exactness than French gallants of that century were in the habit of doing, and Thurot, thanks to his intervention, obtained almost immediate employment on board a Corsair. This time it was in the capacity of seaman, not surgeon, for Thurot was determined that he would work his way up, and learn how to obey ere he sought to command.

And now his education stood him in good stead. Naturally quick, he soon mastered the manual work of his profession; whether Belle-isle's influence had aught to do with his rapid advancement I know not, but at the end of the year 1747 we find him in command of a small Boulogne lugger, plying the trade all craft of her build and port were wont to ply in those days.

In the following year peace was declared, and Thurot now turned honest trader, and made a series of successful voyages to England. But legitimate trading was

but sorry work after the exciting life of a Corsair, and it was soon found that smuggling was more profitable, combining as it did a spice of danger more to the fancy of Thurot and his crew, than sober trips to the Thames or the Avon. Throughout the years that peace lasted, the Marquis of Belle-isle never lost sight of his *protégé*, and when, in 1755, war once more broke out with England, the Intendant of Marine at Boulogne received instructions from Paris to hand over the king's ship *Friponne* to François Thurot, to be armed by him as a Corsair.

It is more than probable, though history is silent on this point, that Belle-isle furnished Thurot with the means of equipping the *Friponne*, and stood guarantee to the State for her, as it is extremely unlikely that Thurot could have amassed enough money in his seven years' Channel trading—or smuggling, if you will—to undertake such a weighty responsibility on his own shoulders, and had any local merchants shared the risk with him, local historians would have recorded the fact and immortalized their names.

Unfortunately no details of this cruise have been preserved, but we may be certain that it was successful beyond all expectations, from the fact that when in December, 1756, Thurot returned to Boulogne to lay up and pay off the *Friponne*, he was called to Paris by the Minister of Marine, and there nominated to a commission as *enseigne de vaisseau* in the king's navy.

When in Paris, Thurot laid before the Minister of Marine a project for the destruction of Portsmouth by means of a fire-ship, and offered to take command of the expedition himself. The scheme, however, found no favour with the court officials, and Thurot was compelled to renounce all hope of earning fame this way.

The success attending the cruise of the *Friponne* had very naturally increased the favor with which the Marquis de Belle-isle regarded his *protégé* and through his interest the young *enseigne de vaisseau* was entrusted with a command less hazardous and promising greater results even than the scheme for the destruction of Portsmouth Dockyard.

The havoc committed by Jean Bart and Duguay Trouin on English trade had not been forgotten at Versailles, and in Thurot was seen a worthy successor to the Corsairs of Dunkirk and St. Malo. He combined all the qualities needed for a successful Corsair—great personal gallantry, a knack of winning to himself the confidence of his employers and of his subordinates, and an intimate knowledge of the English coasts and the seas surrounding them.

Belle-isle pressed forward his claims and his qualifications, with the result that Thurot was ordered to proceed to St. Malo, and there superintend the fitting-out of a small squadron destined to cruise in the North Sea, but with the primary intention of capturing a valuable convoy bound from Archangel to London with furs and Eastern produce.

Thurot's squadron was composed of the *Belle-isle*, a full-rigged ship of nearly 400 tons, carrying thirty guns, and a crew of 140 men, her sister-ship, the *Chauvelin*, 30; a brigantine, the *Gros Thomas*, carrying six 3-pounders and thirty men, and a large cutter, the *Bastien*, ten guns and sixty men. The two smaller craft were to be used as tenders and despatch-boats, to convoy prizes into port, and to return to the squadron with prize-crews, fresh provisions, and water.

At dawn on the morning of the 12th July, 1757, Thurot sailed from St. Malo, and heading to the north-

ward, endeavored to beat out between the islands and Cape la Hogue; but as the sun went down, two large men-of-war were discerned cruising off Granville, and Thurot, seeing that one was a line-of-battle ship and the other a powerful frigate, determined to bout ship and run under the shelter of the land for the night.

The Englishmen, divining his intentions, crowded on all sail after him, and the frigate standing in between him and the island of Cézembre, prevented his entering St. Malo. He, however, succeeded in anchoring with the *Chauvelin* and *Gros Thomas* under the guns of the batteries on Caje Frehel, and so narrowly avoided capture. The *Bastien*, not so fortunate, was captured in endeavouring to enter the Rance. For more than a week the two English vessels standing on and off compelled Thurot to remain at anchor, but a heavy northerly gale coming on forced them to gain an offing, and as when the wind went down no signs of the Englishmen were visible, Thurot once more hove anchor and stood out to sea.

On the 24th he sighted the English coasts, and on the following day made his first prize, a fine brig, the *Rotterdam*, bound from St. Vincent to Southampton with sugar and coffee. The same afternoon, having parted company with his prize, Thurot sighted a large vessel standing to the westward close under the land. Taking her for a merchantman, the *Belle-isle* crowded on all sail in chase, but on coming within range discovered that her antagonist was flying a captain's pennant and was a heavy-armed frigate.

Although the *Chauvelin* was hull down and no hope could be expected from her, Thurot determined on attacking the frigate, and at once opened fire with his 12-pounder bow guns. The Englishman promptly re-

sponded and with such good effect that she cut away the slings of the *Belle-isle's* mainyard, thus effectually stopping further pursuit. Still the Englishman was very severely handled, and was glad enough to escape before the arrival of the *Chauvelin*. The *Belle-isle's* casualties amounted to seven killed and twenty-six wounded, the *Southampton* suffered a loss of sixty killed and wounded.

Throughout the night the crew of the Corsair were busily engaged in repairing damages, sending up their mainyard and a new mizen-topmast in lieu of the spar badly wounded by the *Southampton*, and on the morning of the 26th, finding himself within sight of several large craft which looked suspiciously like English men-of-war, Thurot determined to gain an offing and bear up for a French port, in order to land his wounded and prisoners. Before reaching Calais he was fortunate enough to fall in with a Dutch brig—prize to an English privateer—the prize-crew were too weak to offer any resistance, and hauled down their flag on being summoned to surrender. On the 28th Thurot entered Calais, and having sent his wounded to hospital and shipped fifty fresh men, he once more put to sea.

On the 30th of July he fell in with and captured the packet-boat carrying passengers from Ostend to Dover, but a heavy gale springing up he nearly lost his own ship as well as his prize in trying to work into Boulogne. His spars, crippled in the engagement with the *Southampton*, were in no state to weather a fresh north-wester, and in order to save his ship Thurot was compelled to cut away his masts and signal the *Chauvelin* to come and take him in tow.

In this predicament three English privateers bore down on the French squadron, but M. Desages and M.

de la Tour Audaye, two gallant Malouines serving on the *Chauvelin*, gave proof of rare devotion and courage, and showed such a bold front with that frigate that the Englishmen hauled off without persevering in their attempt, and Thurot, getting some canvas on the stumps of his lower masts, was enabled under the escort of the *Chauvelin* to work his way with his prize into Flushing.

There he determined to give the *Belle-isle* a thorough refit, and it was not until the 18th of September that he was once more ready to take the sea. Ill-fortune still clung to him. On the following morning he fell in with an English squadron of five ships-of-war, and once more narrowly escaped capture, being compelled again to run for shelter and safety into Flushing.

In the engagement the *Belle-isle* lost her bowsprit and fore-topmast, besides being hulled no less than sixty-five times; her casualties, however, only amounted to five killed and seven wounded.

Once more a thorough refit and overhaul became necessary, and whilst Thurot was engaged in preparing the *Belle-isle* for sea, the *Chauvelin* and *Gros Thomas* made short excursions in the hope of picking up a prize. In this expectation they were not only unsuccessful, but M. Desages was unlucky enough to lose the *Gros Thomas*, which was captured by an English frigate. Early in October, Thurot again put to sea, and this time stood to the northward, intending to cruise off the east coast of Scotland. Heavy weather now ensued, and whilst Thurot hoisting English colors ran into the Bay of Findhorn for shelter, the *Chauvelin* stood out to sea; thus the two craft parted company, and for the remainder of the cruise the *Belle-isle* was alone.

On the weather moderating, Thurot, who had learnt

that the Archangel fleet had reached London whilst he was repairing ship at Flushing, determined to stand across the Northern ocean to Bergen, and pick up what prizes he might at the entrance of the Baltic. But the severity of the weather told heavily on the *Belle-isle*, and on arrival at Bergen, Thurot was obliged again to lay up his ship for repairs. On the voyage he picked up a prize which Thurot's biographer, M. de Marcy, asserts to have been "*une frégate du roi*," and this capture to a certain extent calmed the mutinous spirit of the *Belle-isle's* crew, who found the constant cruising in heavy weather in a leaky ship far from according with their ideas of a Corsair's career. Throughout the month of November the crew worked away at repairing ship, and about the middle of December, Thurot again set sail.

Again his evil fortune attended him: heavy gales pursued him wherever he went, and late in December, when off the Orkneys, he was once more dismasted and driven helpless far to the northward.

On the gale abating, Thurot rigged up jury-masts, and favoured by a westerly breeze succeeded in working his crippled craft into Gottenburg. Here he determined to spend the winter, and before starting on his summer cruise to submit the *Belle-isle* to a thorough overhaul. It was not until the month of May that Thurot recommenced operations, and now fortune deigned to smile on the vessel she had so rudely treated throughout the preceding year.

Standing to the southward, Thurot planned to cruise off the east coast of England, and intercept vessels engaged in commerce with the Baltic. His first prize for the year was made on the 17th of May. She was the *William and Charles*, a collier brig bound from New-

castle to Arundel; this was but the opening of a fortunate week, for in the ensuing five days he had captured the *Martha*, the *Prudent Mary*, *Friendship of Sunderland*, and the *Russia*, all laden with coal.

King's ships, however, were cruising in these latitudes, and Thurot's voyage was not destined to be one of uninterrupted success. On the 26th he sighted four large vessels, evidently ships-of-war, and he prudently endeavored to avoid them; in this he was disappointed, as two of them, fine, fast-sailing frigates, overhauled him, and ranging up alongside hailed him to surrender. Thurot, paying no attention, stood unconcernedly on his course. To the summoning gun the *Belle-isle* replied with a broadside, and the unequal engagement at once commenced.

For seven hours the running fight continued, and then a lucky shot from the *Belle-isle* having carried away the fore-topmast of one of the frigates, and the other being in flames, the pursuit slackened, and Thurot was enabled to shake off the larger ships in the course of the night. The Englishmen proved to be the *Dauphin*, whose captain, Macleod, was killed during the engagement, and the *Solebay*, whose commander, Craig, was dangerously wounded in the throat. The *Belle-isle's* casualties amounted to nineteen killed and thirty-four wounded.

In her engagement with the English frigates the *Belle-isle* had been very roughly handled, and his ship's company was much weakened by the prize-crews placed on board the five colliers captured in the course of the preceding fortnight, as well as by the heavy casualties sustained on the 26th May. Thurot therefore determined to put into Bergen once more for repairs and to recruit his numbers.

In those days the crews of privateers were generally a heterogeneous mass; men of all nations shipped under any flag, and as in France there were very stringent rules, forbidding corsairs to carry more than a very limited number of French sailors (this with a view of retaining the services of the seafaring population for the king's ships), it generally happened that the majority of men serving on French corsairs were either landsmen or sailors of other nationalities.

Many an Englishman might have been found sailing out of Dunkirk or Calais, and if the records of those cities are true, some of their most famous corsairs were either English or American seamen who had good reason for not sailing under the Cross of St. George.

Swedes, Norwegians and Danes had then, as now, a great reputation as honest, sober, good sailormen, and now that the tide of luck had turned in his favour, Thurot felt sure he would have little difficulty in filling up his crew in Bergen.

The voyage across the North Sea was unmarked by an incident save the capture of a small English schooner, which being a smart sailer Thurot determined to turn into a tender to the *Belle-isle*. On reaching Bergen the *Belle-isle* was at once put into the shipbuilders' hands. Fearful of losing touch of his good fortune, Thurot placed one long twelve-pounder and six four-pounders upon the prize, which he named the *Homard*, and started off in her himself for a cruise off the coasts of Denmark.

Once more fortune favoured him, and he returned to Bergen on the 4th June with two prizes, the brig *Christian*, laden with coal from Newcastle to Riga, and the barque *Bourgan*, bound for London with hemp. In the course of a few days the *Belle-isle* was again ready for

sea, and Thurot, finding that a stream of English traders was pouring into the Baltic, determined to continue his cruising to intercept these vessels.

In the three weeks that intervened between his again putting to sea and his return to Christiansand for provisions and water, he captured nine prizes, the *Amity*, *Catherine*, *Lothian*, *Margaret*, *Elizabeth*, *Sally*, *Jenny*, *Success*, and *Jane and Elizabeth*; with the exception of the last named, none of these vessels attempted any resistance, and the essence of fight died out of the *Jane and Elizabeth* when a round shot, in reply to her first gun, plunged on to her poop, carrying away her tiller, killing the man at the wheel, and wounding three of her hands.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and of this proverb Thurot felt the proof; his crew were now in good fighting order and in capital spirits, no signs of disaffection since the prizes had been tumbling in so fast; still Thurot felt it wise to give them a run ashore now and then, for obvious reasons. Reaching Christiansand on the 27th July, he determined to wait there until the *Homard* should rejoin him with some of the men working his prizes to a French port, and consequently it was not until the 12th of July he made the sea again.

The opening of this cruise was inauspicious enough. As dawn broke on the 13th he found himself within sight of a large English convoy of seventeen fine merchantmen and two ships of war; the two latter, at once divining the character of the *Belle-isle*, bore down upon her, and it needed all Thurot's skill and ingenuity to escape them.

It was not until night fell that Thurot shook off his pursuers, and this he did by the then common ruse of dousing all his own lights and setting a boat adrift with

a square sail set and rudder lashed, to carry a lantern away to leeward; then, putting about, the *Belle-isle* ran through the convoy and was safe.

The escape had been a narrow one, for the pursuing craft had kept up an accurate fire on the *Belle-isle* for some hours, and though the range had been long and the Corsair had suffered little in spars or rigging, Thurot had to deplore the loss of four killed and twelve wounded amongst his already too depleted crew.

As dawn broke, the convoy was out of sight, and Thurot drew a sigh of relief. This was soon turned into one of self-gratulation as he saw coming towards him a fine brig, whose every spar showed her to be an Englishman. Running up the English flag, Thurot signalled the brig to send a boat aboard with papers, and as the Englishman, in obedience to the summons, hove-to and prepared to obey these orders, the *Belle-isle* ranged up alongside, ran up her true colors, and hailed the brig to surrender.

Resistance was out of the question, and in an hour the brig *George and Joseph*, from London to St. Petersburg, was bowling along towards Boulogne with a prize-crew on board. That same evening a second prize was captured, the *Blankney* of Leith; but on the following day the *Belle-isle* herself had a narrow escape, being chased until night fell by three English frigates, the *Chatham*, *Deptford*, and *Aquilon*. It was evident that cruisers were too plentiful in these latitudes, so Thurot continued his northerly course, and ran to the Faro isles for shelter and for fresh water. On the 10th August he ventured to sea again, this time standing down the west coast of Scotland and on the 18th of the same month he captured two brigantines, the *John* and the

Truelove, the former in ballast, the latter laden with pig-iron.

On the 31st of the month, being close off the land, he ran into Lough Swilly, and sent his long-boat ashore to buy fresh meat; the officer in command came across a farmer, who refused to make a deal unless he purchased his whole flock of 150. The privateersman, with ready wit, paid for a dozen, which he put into the long-boat, and told the farmer if he would come off to the ship the captain would pay for the remainder and send other boats ashore to ship them. On reaching the *Belle-isle*, the Irish farmer at once saw the real nature of the craft, and roundly abused the officer who had deceived him into selling his sheep to a Frenchman.

To put the man ashore would have been once more to put the English Admiralty on his track, so Thurot at once put to sea, carrying the Irish farmer with him. Standing to the northward, on the following day Thurot sighted a barque, and on coming up to her saw two more craft ahead. Placing a prize-crew on the barque, which proved to be the *Henry*, a fine vessel, bound from St. Vincent to Glasgow with sugar, the *Belle-isle* stood on after the two strange sail, which proved to be two armed merchantmen, who evinced a disposition to fight. But the *Belle-isle's* crew were well drilled and disciplined, almost ready to hold their own with a man-of-war of equal size. They served their guns with rapidity and precision, and the two merchantmen soon saw that they had no chance against a powerfully-armed and well-manned Corsair.

After a few rounds from the *Belle-isle*, these vessels hauled down their colors, and Thurot, on taking possession, found them to be the *Charlestown*, twelve guns, and *Britannia*, fourteen, both bound from Liverpool to

New York. Placing prize-crews on board, with orders to take the vessels into Brest, Thurot determined himself to return to Bergen, there to ship fresh men in place of the many hands placed on board his prizes, and to land also the prisoners, who, being exceedingly numerous, rendered the working of the ship difficult, and occupied a considerable number of the crew in guarding them.

When off the Mull of Kantyre, Thurot fell in with a Dutch ship, the *Admiral Ruyter*, carrying eighteen guns, and in charge of a prize crew of H.M.S. *Boyne*, which frigate had captured her in the West Indies. The young officer commanding the *Admiral Ruyter* did not feel himself justified in opposing force to Thurot's summons to surrender; he had but sixteen English seamen on board, and with only these to work her guns resistance was well-nigh useless. Still further weakening the *Belle-isle's* crew by sending men on board his new prize, Thurot determined to put into the nearest neutral port without delay, and was thankful enough to reach Bergen on the 13th September, where, landing over 270 prisoners who cumbered his decks, he proceeded to careen and repair his ship.

Upwards of a month was spent in Bergen. There, being rejoined by the *Homard*, with eighty of his old hands from Boulogne, Thurot again put to sea, this time for a cruise off the east coast of England. On the 30th of November, the *Buxton*, bound from London to St. Petersburg, with cotton goods, and on the 1st of December, the *Dublin*, a collier brig, was captured. And now winter was closing in, a succession of heavy gales, which tested the seaworthy capacity of the crank old *Belle-isle*, warned Thurot that he would be foolish to run the risk of a second winter campaign.

Well satisfied with the twenty-seven goodly vessels that had fallen into his hands during the summer, he hauled his wind, and standing to the southward made for Boulogne. Nearing the French coast, he learnt that a numerous English flotilla was watching the ports of Boulogne and Calais, so wisely avoiding all risks, he put into Ostend, and there paid off the *Belle-isle*, and proceeded at once to Paris, to solicit anew the protection of his powerful patron, in whose name he had carried on such a successful expedition.

We have seen that during his recent cruise, Thurot had been enabled on several occasions to take refuge in Scotch and Irish ports, merely by hoisting English colors and taking advantage of the service of the many English-speaking men on his vessel.

He had played the *rôle* of an English ship, and when, owing to stress of weather or shortness of provisions, he had deemed a run to port necessary, he had never hesitated to make for one in the north of Scotland or of Ireland. The facility thus afforded him of landing on an enemy's shores, very naturally opened up to him dreams of utilizing the credulity of the people in order to inflict upon them those ills which France was desirous of inflicting upon England.

A descent upon the coasts of Scotland or of Ireland was practicable enough, a compact force landed suddenly in a spot far from regular garrisons might ravage the country far and wide before compelled by superior force to beat a retreat to its ships, and Thurot found no difficulty in explaining to the minister of marine that it was feasible enough to pay England back in her own coin—that France could play the part of organizing minor expeditions as well as England, and that the grand monarch was as capable of carrying the

war into the enemy's country as was the king of England.

There were, of course, at Versailles men who stoutly opposed Thurot's project, and who, mindful of his dreams of destroying Portsmouth dockyard, endeavoured to cast ridicule on the more sober plan; on the other hand there were many who saw in it every element of success, and amongst these was Thurot's old patron, the Marquis de Belle-isle: he, indeed, supported it with all his eloquence and all his influence, and though Belle-isle was not able to secure for Thurot the chief command, he succeeded in getting him nominated to the charge of an independent squadron, acting in concert with the fleet under Monsieur de Conflans.

The news of the intended expedition soon spread abroad, and caused the greatest consternation in England. Fresh credits were demanded from the House of Commons, in order to place the kingdom beyond reach of this threatened danger, and Parliament not only cheerfully voted the sums asked for the defence of the coasts, but sanctioned the issue of letters of marque to a large number of corsairs, destined to aid the more effectually in blockading the French ports, and thus preventing the exit of the invading fleet.

Despite the fact that his designs had been betrayed, and no one knew better than Thurot that secrecy was the first element of success in an affair of this sort, the preparations for the expedition were pushed on with vigour—Rochfort, Brest, and Port Louis resounded with the din of toil—night and day workmen were busy in fitting out ships destined to take part in the invasion of England, and from all parts of France troops were concentrating on the shores of the Atlantic for embarkation on de Conflans' fleet.

Thurot in the meantime was busily employed at Dunkirk on a humbler project; his orders were to make sail to the west coast of Ireland, in order to draw off the attention of the English from the true attack. The defeat of Conflans' fleet off Quiberon, by Hawke, forms no portion of my narrative, and I will confine myself merely to a recital of Thurot's exploits.

On the 15th of October, 1759, Thurot, now a *capitaine de frégate* in the king's navy, left Dunkirk on his perilous mission. His squadron was composed of five frigates; the *Maréchal de Belle-isle*, 44, *Bégon*, 36, *Blonde*, 32, *Terpsichore*, 26, *Amarante*, 18, and *Faucon*, despatch-boat. These vessels carried, in addition to their crews, 1200 men, made up of detachments from the Grenadiers of the Guard, the Brigades d'Artois and de Bourgoyne, and the foreign legions; the whole under the command of M. de Flobert, general of brigade.

A strong south-west wind had driven the English blockading squadron away from the French shore, and consequently Thurot was enabled to get out of the port in safety; but, being ignorant of the exact whereabouts of the enemy, and knowing that instructions had been sent to the commanders of the troops in Scotland and Ireland to be on the watch for him, he determined to put into Ostend until he was certain of being able to make a clear run to the northward. On the 18th he once more stood out to sea, and on the 22nd put into Gothenburg, feeling sure that the fact of his being reported in these latitudes would induce the English commanders to scour the North Sea for him.

During the voyage from Ostend to Gothenburg, Thurot made a couple of prizes, the brigantine *William*, and a three-masted schooner, the *Lincoln*. Here he was joined by his old despatch-boat, the *Homard*, which

had done him such good service in his cruise during the preceding year. After a few days' stay in Gothenburg, in order to thoroughly overhaul his ships, Thurot once more put to sea, and on the 28th anchored at Thors-haven, in the Faro islands, where he took on board live-stock and other provisions. Throughout the voyage from Gothenburg the squadron had experienced extremely heavy weather, and had been compelled to separate. Thurot, however, had given Thorshaven as a rendezvous, and within a few days of his arrival all his fleet with the exception of the *Bégon* had entered the port.

And now commenced a series of quarrels between the naval and military commanders, which thus early threatened to mar the success of the expedition. De Flobert, a general of brigade in the army, felt aggrieved at the position accorded him, and openly gave vent to his dissatisfaction. It was not long ere he had succeeded in ranging on his side not only the officers of the land forces, the majority of whom were men of birth and fortune, but also the captains of the *Amarante*, *Blonde*, and *Terpsichore*, who happened to be bearers of the king's commission, and as members of that aristocratic service the king's navy felt humiliated at being subjected to the indignity of serving under a man who had commenced life as a corsair.

Flobert openly showed his hatred of Thurot, and took every means of letting his feelings be known throughout the fleet, and, taking fresh offence at his being kept in ignorance of the ultimate destination of the expedition, openly, in the presence of some junior officers, demanded that Thurot should submit his plan of operations, if indeed he had any plan, to a council, consisting

of the commanders of the various vessels and the officers of his Majesty's troops.

Thurot had long foreseen that he was an object of aversion to de Flobert, but knowing that a cordial co-operation with the land forces was essential to the success of the expedition, had endeavored so to comport himself as to remove all cause for jealousy, and even now he offered to explain his plans to Flobert, on consideration that that officer would keep them secret. The ministry had enjoined on Thurot the absolute necessity of secrecy in regard to his destination, and this in itself should have been sufficient to have induced de Flobert to remain satisfied with Thurot's silence; but jealousy, that demon which has ruined so many military enterprises, and which is so rarely absent from those conducted by French troops, again stepped in, and de Flobert refused to listen to a word of explanation unless given fully and freely in presence of all his Majesty's officers.

This Thurot refused to do, and de Flobert, galled to the quick at the firmness displayed by the plebeian sailor, was injudicious enough to threaten to place Thurot under the custody of a file of the grenadiers of the guard and return to France with him as a prisoner. The knowledge, however, that Thurot had powerful friends at court, prompted de Flobert to rest satisfied with the threat, but what induced Thurot to allow the mutinous general of brigade to remain in command of the troops it is difficult to say.

Had the naval commander shown one tithe of the decision of character with regard to these unseemly dissensions, that he showed gallantry in action, the result of the expedition would have been very sensibly affected. Had he placed de Flobert under the custody

of a file of his own crew, and sent him a prisoner to France, the mischievous dallings which took place at Carrickfergus would never have occurred, and France, perchance, would have been able to congratulate herself on the success, not the failure, of Thurot's enterprise.

De Flobert, too weak to carry out his threat of making a prisoner of Thurot, now formulated lengthy complaints as to the treatment accorded to his men. The provisions served out to them were scanty, and of bad quality, water prior to putting into the Faroes had been undrinkable, the accommodation bad, sickness too had broken out which had impaired their health and efficiency; he therefore demanded that the squadron should return to France, its numbers being too weak to effect even a favourable diversion on the Irish coasts.

Thurot listened to the complaints, and read the wordy documents with praiseworthy patience, but he was in noways moved from his original design.

England is the objective of this expedition, he said; when the weather gets more favourable we will seek fresh food and water on the coasts of the British Isles, but to return to France before having made a raid on Great Britain was not to be thought of. Finding Thurot obstinate, de Flobert now endeavoured to seduce the captains from their allegiance, and succeeded in winning over the officers commanding the *Amarante*, *Blonde*, and *Terpsichore* to his side, these miscreants promising that directly they received their orders from de Flobert they would part company with the *Maréchal de Belle-isle*, and make the best of their way homewards.

Thurot had some intuition of what was going on, for he insisted on de Flobert remaining on board his own ship—the better, as he said, that their schemes for

landing on the Irish coast might be carried out, but in reality to prevent his plotting more with the sailors of the fleet.

With the break of the new year, the long succession of heavy gales moderated, and on the 6th of January Thurot, with the *Amarante*, *Blonde*, and *Terpsichore* in company, put out from Thorshaven, and steering a southerly course, endeavoured to make Londonderry.

The fair weather was not of long continuance, and though the isles of Lewis and St. Kilda were passed, and the Irish coasts actually sighted, a terrible gale from the west compelled Thurot to seek an offing, and gradually beat up to the northward. On the 10th of February, the weather having again moderated, Thurot once more bore up for Ireland. That evening the *Maréchal de Belle-isle* fell in with and captured an English brig, the *Boyne*, laden with grain and wheat-flour, and by dividing her cargo amongst the four ships of his squadron, Thurot was enabled to ameliorate the condition of his men, who had not touched soft bread since leaving Gothenburg.

Although the promised land was actually in sight, and a landing might be effected at any moment—a landing in which the highest qualities of his men would be needed in order to achieve success—de Flobert never hesitated in the course he had marked out for himself.

His hatred and jealousy of Thurot had reached such a pitch that his one thought was to thwart the naval commander on every opportunity. He was always loudly asseverating the folly of persisting in the enterprise, the impossibility of its succeeding, and inveighing against the unfair treatment accorded to the soldiers on board the fleet. Thurot, of course, was well aware

of this, and also aware that the crews of the other vessels were tainted with disaffection.

He hoped, however, that the prospect of a fight with the hated English, backed up by the prospect of plunder, would induce the men to remain faithful to him until he had given them a chance of proving that the difficulties and danger of the enterprise were not so formidable as de Flobert chose to suppose. This was not to be. Even with the coast of Ireland on their lee, and with the prospect of an engagement within the next four-and-twenty hours, the *Amarante*, refused to obey signals to close with the flagship, but stood on to the southward, and signalled her intention of returning to France.

The *Blonde* and *Terpsichore* did the same; but Thurot, laying himself alongside the former vessel, threatened to blow her out of the water unless she hove-to and sent her captain on board the *Maréchal de Belle-isle*.

The commanders of these two ships, overawed at Thurot's attitude, at once repaired on board the flagship, and there explained to their chief that they were practically helpless in the matter, as the officers of the king's troops had threatened them with death unless they at once made sail for France. Thurot was not long in making up his mind. Sending a second boat to the *Blonde*, he ordered M. de Rusilly, the colonel of the Brigade d'Artoise, to repair on board the *Belle-isle*, and then summoning de Flobert to his cabin, he found himself face to face with the instigator of the mutiny.

De Flobert, a haughty aristocrat of violent passions, refused to listen to Thurot's explanation, but dashing out of the cabin, ordered a corporal and four men of the guard to place the naval officers in irons. Matters were

fast approaching a crisis. De Rusilly and the captains of the *Blonde* and *Térpsichore* counselled prudence, and besought de Flobert not to proceed to extremities. The latter raged and fumed and gesticulated, inciting his hesitating men to carry out their orders.

Thurot alone preserved his *sang-froid*. First taking his loaded pistols out of their case and seeing that the priming was fresh in the pan, he warned the grenadiers halting in indecision at the cabin-door that the first one who entered was a dead man; then turning to his servant, he ordered him to tell the boatswain to pipe all hands aft. Then unlocking his desk, he took from it an imposing-looking document, sealed with the royal arms, and angrily striding past the shrinking grenadiers, mounted the poop, where de Flobert, de Rusilly and others were in close talk.

On the crew assembling under the break of the poop, Thurot addressed them in a few well-chosen words, reminding them of the successful termination of their cruise of the preceding year which had opened so inauspiciously. Many of those now before him had sailed in the old *Belle-isle* too, and could trust him when he promised them an equally happy ending to this expedition. The dissensions that had unfortunately broken out had been none of his seeking; it was impossible harmony could exist, or success be hoped for, as long as two men aspired to the chief command.

"Here, then," said Thurot, "is my commission from the king—here are my instructions. If M. de Flobert can show me aught placing him over me, I will bow to his Majesty's decision; if not,"—and here Thurot turned to de Flobert, and with a stern and solemn air added, "I promise him that, should he fail to obey my every order, or endeavour to incite further mutiny, I

will carry him a prisoner to Versailles, and there have him shot as a mutineer."

The reading of the king's commission had a great effect on de Rusilly and the doubting captains, and when Thurot, turning to his clerk, ordered him to make out four copies of each of the documents in order that they might be posted on the decks of the other ships, these gentlemen saw that their only course was submission, and this they also counselled de Flobert to follow.

Checkmated for the present, the proud soldier agreed to follow Thurot's orders so long as he was on board the *Belle-isle*, but with a bad grace threatened that on their return to France he would bring before the king Thurot's hesitating, vacillating conduct, and point out how valuable time had been wasted and priceless opportunities ignored by their senseless delays at Gothenburg and Thorshaven.

Satisfied with this temporary truce, Thurot permitted the captains of the *Blonde* and *Terpsichore* to rejoin their ships, and warned M. de Rusilly against any further tampering with his officers.

That night heavy weather again broke, the French squadron once more was driven to the nor'ard. Finding himself near the isle of Isla, Thurot determined to run in and purchase live-stock and provisions for his men, but the Highlanders were afraid to have any dealings with the French, fearful lest such might be construed into treachery and draw down upon them the punishment of a not too lenient government.

Provisions Thurot was determined to have, so landing four companies of grenadiers, he marched to the principal farms and succeeded in seizing over forty head of cattle and a considerable amount of grain and flour. It was no part of French policy to irritate

the Highlanders, and Thurot paid the men a goodly price for what they were glad enough to part with under compulsion.

On the 17th February Thurot once more stood to the south, and on the 19th captured the *Ingram*, a large ship bound from Lisbon to Glasgow with oranges and wine, a prize specially valuable at that juncture, when the men were suffering somewhat from scurvy. On the following day, being in sight of land, and the weather giving every promise of holding, Thurot explained to de Flobert his project for a descent on the Irish coast.

His two principal objects were to release the French prisoners in Belfast and Carrickfergus, and to lay these towns under contribution. Their garrisons were weak, and consisted chiefly of militia, their defences consisted of some old stone castles, unworthy the name of fortifications, and happily no vessels of war were in the neighbourhood, nor was it yet known to the English that the French squadron was in these waters. At Isla Thurot had learnt from a Scotch gentleman that Conflans' fleet had been ignominiously defeated by Hawke, and that the English Government was under the impression that Thurot had been recalled to France.

It was not in de Flobert's nature to acquiesce tamely in the projects of another. Thurot wished to land at Whitehouse, and then to move rapidly on Carrickfergus and Belfast. De Flobert, after studying the map, insisted on landing at Kilroote and then moving on Carrickfergus and Belfast. That Thurot should have given in, though against his better judgment, is not to be wondered at. De Flobert was a man of considerable military experience, of high military rank, and many years the senior of the young naval captain, and after a short discussion it was decided that de Flobert, with all the

troops, should be landed at Kilroote, and that Thurot, with the squadron, should anchor at Whitehouse and afford such assistance as might be necessary.

The landing was unopposed, and de Flobert at once marched on Carrickfergus. Here he met with most determined resistance; but, with the aid of four guns, dragged by the blue jackets of the *Belle-isle*, he soon knocked a breach in the castle walls, and then attempted to carry the place by assault.

But the English soldiers, though outnumbered four to one, held out gallantly; twice were the assaulting columns repelled, but the commandant knew that though he might perchance hold his own in the castle he could not protect the town from sack, and after a consultation with the mayor, he hung out a white flag and despatched an officer to treat with de Flobert.

The terms were soon arranged. The town was to be spared assault and pillage, and in return was to furnish the French with a stated quantity of live-stock and provisions, the garrison were not to be considered prisoners of war, Colonel Jennings agreeing that an equal number of French prisoners in Belfast and Carrickfergus should be handed over to Thurot in exchange; the place was to be evacuated by the English garrison immediately, who were to march out with all the honors of war, suitable hostages being left in de Flobert's hands to answer for the fulfilment of the terms.

The fight, though short, had been severe; the French, working in the open, had suffered more heavily than the English, sheltered as they were behind the walls of the castle. Colonel Jennings' force had lost but four killed and twelve wounded, whilst the casualties of the French had been nineteen killed and thirty-four wounded, amongst the latter being de Flobert, who, in

gallantly leading on the second assault, had been shot through the leg by a musket ball.

On disembarking at Whitehouse, Thurot learnt of de Flobert's wound and of his success, and he at once sent orders that the next senior officer should assume command and should move immediately on Belfast. Thurot felt there was no hope of making more than a series of dashing raids on the nearest towns and inflicting as much damage on the English as he possibly could in as short a time as possible. News of his descent would speedily reach Dublin, and then not only would troops be moved northwards to drive his small force into the sea, but a fleet would most assuredly be sent round to the north coast to prevent his escape.

He was in no condition either to face regular troops on land or to fight king's ships on the high seas. The *Amarante* had deserted him, the crews of the *Blonde* and *Terpsichore* were tainted, their officers openly disaffected, and his own ship's company had been considerably weakened by the necessity of embarking prize-crews on the captured English merchantmen. De Flobert once more refused to fall in with Thurot's projects; he was either of a more cautious mood or was determined to thwart Thurot to the very end: he absolutely refused to move on Belfast until the terms of the surrender of Carrickfergus were carried out to the letter, and not all the orders nor all the threats of Thurot induced him to abate his fixed resolve.

Finding himself in this *impasse*, Thurot landed, and at once inaugurated measures for a raid on Belfast; two officers of the king's troops, M. de Beauhamel and the Comte de Scordich, volunteered to command the expedition; but de Flobert addressed such a powerful remonstrance to Thurot that that officer, feeling the

weight of military opinion was against him, and feeling also that in the event of defeat he would be held responsible at Versailles for the loss of his Majesty's grenadiers, reluctantly consented for the moment to abandon the enterprise.

Still Thurot did not abandon all hope of inducing de Flobert to change his opinion, and answered de Flobert's remonstrance with a despatch, in which he cogently advanced the advisability of an advance. De Flobert was immovable. He pointed out that his men were weak in numbers (the *Amarante* had carried away 250 of his best troops); that they had been cooped up on shipboard for some months, that their health as well as their discipline had suffered, and that their *morale* had been impaired by the disinclination shown by Thurot to land them on the Irish coast.

Finding that there was no hope of making the raid on Belfast, and knowing that every hour's delay rendered attack on the part of the English more probable, Thurot gave instructions for the re-embarkation of the troops. The town of Carrickfergus, in lieu of the unprovided balance of provisions, agreed to pay Thurot the sum of a thousand pounds, and the mayor and three of the principal inhabitants were conveyed on board the *Maréchal de Belle-isle* as hostages for the due performance of Colonel's Jennings' terms of surrender. De Flobert and a few of the more seriously wounded cases were left on shore, the English commander promising to take them under his special protection.

On the 25th February the troops re-embarked, but Thurot still remained anchored off Whitehouse, waiting for the money and provisions. The monotony of the proceedings were varied by the capture of a vessel

called the *Clyde*, laden with tobacco and sugar from the West Indies. On the 27th, Thurot learnt that the Duke of Bedford had despatched a squadron to the north to attack him, and feeling himself all unequal to the combat, he weighed anchor and stood to sea, in the hope of escaping action.

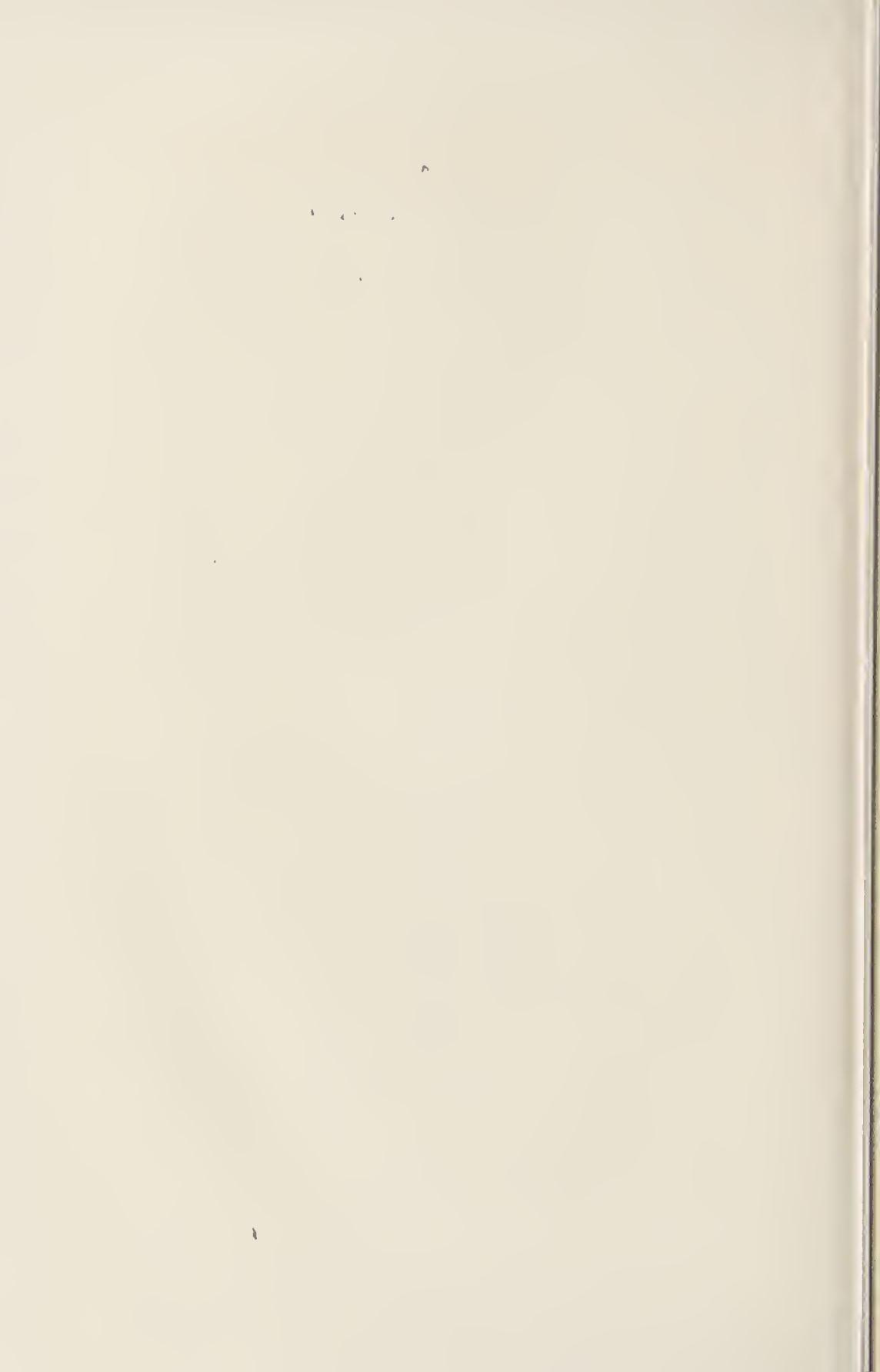
Scarcely had he left the harbour, before the English ships were sighted; these were the *Eolus*, 36 guns and 240 men, Captain Elliot, who was also in command of the squadron; the *Pallas*, 32, Captain Clements; and the *Brilliant*, 32, Captain Logie; each of these frigates carried 220 men.

The details of this fight are fully given in "Contemporary Historians," and are familiar enough to naval readers; suffice to say that the French commander was basely deserted by his consorts, the *Blonde* and *Terpsichore*, who crowded on all sail and endeavoured to escape; they paid no attention to his signals of *raillement* which were flying throughout the engagement and that for two hours the *Maréchal de Belle-isle*, alone and unaided, bore the united attacks of the three English frigates.

At last, dismasted and helpless, and with ninety of her crew *hors de combat*, her flag was silently lowered: but not by Thurot's orders, for on an English officer pulling alongside to take possession of the prize, it was found that the brave young Corsair had been struck in the pit of the stomach by a round shot and killed on the spot; then, and not till then, did his officers venture to think of surrender, and ere admitting the English to the ship Thurot had fought so well, they had, with feelings of misplaced chivalry, consigned the body of their gallant commander to the sea, in order that he



Her flag was silently lowered.



in death might avoid the fate he so dreaded when alive—of falling into the hands of his hated foe.

The *Belle-isle* captured, Elliot ordered the *Pallas* and *Brilliant* to stand after the two other French ships, and these, as might have been expected from their previous conduct, hauled down their flags without attempting further resistance.

That evening Elliot worked his squadron, with their prizes, into Ramsey harbour (Isle of Man), and then set to work to repair damages. The *Belle-isle*, it was found, had eight feet of water in her hold, the *Eolus* and *Pallas* were in but slightly better condition, the former vessel having been hulled forty-seven times, and having lost a large proportion of her crew.

The representatives of the Duke of Athol, who then owned the Isle of Man absolutely refused permission to Captain Elliot to land his prisoners on the island, so that, as soon as the vessels were sufficiently repaired to undertake the voyage to Belfast, the little fleet set sail for that port, and the Frenchmen, after a short stay in Ireland, where they were treated with every kindness, the officers being allowed the most perfect liberty, were embarked on board two English ships, the *William and George* and the *Lord Dunluce*, and conveyed to St. Malo, where they were released.

The news of Thurot's defeat and death caused a violent sensation in France. By those who remembered the achievements of Duquesne, Jean Bart, and Duguay Trouin, all of whom had sprung from the ranks and had been compelled to fight against the jealous enmity of the aristocrats of the king's navy, he was looked upon as a martyr to aristocratic jealousy; the failure of his expedition was attributed to the conduct of de Flobert,

and his death laid at the doors of the cowardly captains of the *Blonde* and *Terpsichore*.

On the other hand, there were many who rejoiced in the collapse of his enterprise, and who saw in it a death-blow to the system which gave plebeian Corsairs high commands, and subjected men of noble blood to the ignominy of serving under them.

The most unjust accusations were levelled at the dead hero. It was asserted that his ultimate defeat was due to his rapacity, and that had he been content with the meagre success won at Carrickfergus (and knowing that he could no longer aid de Conflans, it was maintained that he ought to have been so satisfied), and at once re-embarked his troops and made sail homewards, he would have avoided Elliot's squadron, and in all probability have returned unharmed to France.

Thurot's whole career, short as it was, gave the lie to these aspersions. He had ever shown himself generous to his prisoners, and his treatment of the people of Isla, as well as the small sum which he accepted in lieu of provisions at Carrickfergus, show that he was actuated by no mercenary motives, but looked on his expedition not as a mere buccaneering excursion, but as one waged on the higher principles of war.

If further proof were necessary of the integrity of his main motives, it may be found in the fact that he through whose hands such vast sums had passed, and who had captured so many prizes and had enjoyed so many opportunities of amassing a fortune, left his wife in absolute penury. Her circumstances were made known to the Minister of Marine, but he, fearful of offending the king's navy, the members of which looked upon Thurot as a personal foe to their interests, and

his memory as a blot on their escutcheon, was afraid to aid the poor woman with even a paltry pension.

Fortunately there were others about the Court less fearful of courtly favourites than the Duc de Choiseul; and Madame de Pompadour, learning the straits to which Madame Thurot was reduced, sent her a handsome remittance, and in a galling letter to the Marquis de Belle-isle announced her intention of providing for the widow of one of the bravest men France had ever possessed.

It were charitable to believe that Belle-isle had been till then in ignorance of the real circumstances of Madame Thurot, and that his future action was based on real generosity not on false shame. At any rate he now moved in the matter, and the monarch, on Belle-isle's representation, administered a severe rebuke to the Minister of Marine, with the result that a pension of fifteen hundred livres tournois was bestowed on the young widow.

It is evident, from the very nature of the force placed at Thurot's disposal, that the French government did not regard the enterprise in any very serious light. The real invasion of England was to be effected by de Conflans, Thurot was to arrange a diversion which should distract the English fleet from the real point of descent, and then leave the coast clear for the high-born admiral to reap fresh honours.

Hawkes gallantly nipped the enterprise in the bud, and after the battle of Quiberon it was well known in England that Thurot could accomplish nothing that could not be stamped out by a handful of men under a determined and energetic leader. Even when he had landed and Carrickfergus had been seized, there was no danger of his making good his foothold in Ireland,

and the temporizing policy pursued by Colonel Jennings, so easily fallen in with by de Flobert, was well calculated to keep the French expedition on the coast until the Duke of Bedford should be able to crush it by sea and by land.

Thurot was the only one of the great Corsairs of France who perished in action, and his striking career is also noticeable for the fact that his early life was spent far from the sea and that he did not embrace a sailor's calling until he had reached an age when Jean Bart, Duguay Trouin and Jacques Cassard were already in independent commands.

More than this, he attained fame at an earlier age than any of them, and though he held but the rank of commander (*capitaine de frégate*) when he so bravely fell on the *Belle-isle's* decks, there is no reason to doubt that had he been spared he would have reached the highest honours, and, like Duquesne and Duguay Trouin, would have shown that a humble origin was no bar to a man possessed of bravery, energy and self-reliance aspiring to, and obtaining, the command of the fleets of the King of France.

For a short five years only did Thurot wear the king's uniform, and surely history has not handed down to us the name of one officer who in such a brief period achieved so much. The determination evinced in his daring escape from Dover, won for him one powerful friend, and then good seamanship, gallantry, and self-devotion achieved the rest. Though his career was cut short at an age when other Corsair heroes were but wooing fame, the name of François Thurot stands on a par with the greatest seamen France has yet possessed.

CHAPTER VI

Leveillé of Dunkirk



FOREMOST among the Corsairs of Dunkirk (during the 1790's) were John Blackmann, by some said to be an Irish patriot, by others an American, and Louis Leveillé, a native of Dunkirk itself.

Leveillé was one of that race of hardy seamen indigenous to the soil of Northern France; his whole life had been spent at sea, and the greater part in vessels hailing from his native port. He had served the traders between Dunkirk and Leith, in fishing craft on the Doggerbank, and in the smugglers which plied so lucrative a trade between Ostend and the Sussex coast.

He was well known as a daring and skilful seaman, one looked up to by his men, and one who enjoyed the confidence of his employers. When, therefore, the decree of the 31st January turned the attention of the hitherto peaceful traders to the more exciting and presumably more profitable game of privateering, Leveillé was early selected by some of his former patrons for the command of a Dunkirk Corsair.

It was not, however, until the year 1795 that his name began to make itself heard on both sides of the Channel. Not that Leveillé ever achieved the fame of his fellow-townsmen Jacobsen and Jean Bart, or of those world-renowned Malouines, Duguay Trouin and

Surcouf. He was no Corsair scouring distant seas at the head of powerful squadrons, or commanding buccaneering expeditions on a grandiose scale; he was a privateer pure and simple, whose field of operations was, until his last cruise, confined to the Channel, whose vessel was little adapted for long sea voyages, and whose success depended on the swiftness of his ship and his knowledge of the coasts round which he sailed.

The success which attended his first and humbler efforts led to his being placed in a more important command, but it was in the waters nearer home that his fame was gained.

It was in the month of September, 1795, that Leveillé cleared out of Dunkirk on the *Vengeance*, a smart brig, carrying twelve guns and a crew of eighty-four men. Constructed especially for privateering, the *Vengeance* was built on extremely fine lines, and her armament intended to enable her to cope, if necessary, with the numerous small government craft which the English Admiralty had commissioned to check the depredations of French privateers.

Her broadside guns consisted of ten six-pounders, and a couple of long twelves were mounted, one on her top-gallant forecastle, one under her poop. Her crew, largely composed of the usual riff-raff with which French Corsairs had to content themselves, numbered some fourteen sturdy seamen who had sailed under Leveillé in more peaceful days, and who were well prepared to follow him now in these more exciting times, and twenty landsmen who had yet to learn their calling.

Leveillé's first cruise was crowned with the greatest good fortune; he was absent from port but thirty-three days, and yet in these short five weeks he made no fewer than twenty English prizes; of these five were either

sunk or burnt at sea by Leveillé's orders, their crews and gear, and cargoes having been first removed; the remaining fifteen were convoyed into harbor by the *Vengeance*.

The feeling of generosity and of pity was rarely to be found in the breast of a privateer, and though the ransoming and wanton destruction of an enemy's ship was against the rules laid down by the National Convention for the guidance of captains holding letters of marque, these gentry, when their prizes were small craft not worth the trouble of sending into harbour, would either ransom them, if the captain of the prize was able to give satisfactory evidence of his ability to draw a bill in favour of the captor, or, failing this pecuniary indemnification, they would quietly send the ship to the bottom—many and many an English fishing-smack or small trader was thus summarily disposed of.

The fifteen prizes Leveillé convoyed or sent into port during his first cruise produced a rich profit. Four of them were laden with Admiralty stores, four with wheat, and two with wood from Russian ports. Two were fine East Indiamen which had left Calcutta before the declaration of war, and were totally unprepared for resistance. These vessels, proceeding up the Channel under a fair breeze, were nearing home after a long voyage; their crews, looking forward to the delights of Wapping and Ratcliffe highway after having been cooped-up for five months in the forecastle of an Indiaman, were busy painting ship and making everything smart and ship-shape before hauling into dock.

The summoning gun of the vicious little brig which was standing across their bows as they neared the South Foreland, had but small terrors for them, she was

merely a British cruiser, anxious to show a little spell of brief authority to the large merchantman, socially her inferior.

In accordance with the universal custom of French Corsairs, the *Vengeance*, on firing the summoning gun, had hoisted English colors, and the leading Indiaman, thinking she was a ship of war, first lowered her royal and top-gallant-yards in salute, and then bracing her main-yard in answer to the summons, prepared to send a boat on board. Suddenly, as the brig ranged up within pistol-shot, the English colors were hauled down, the tricolour flew out in their place, and a peremptory summons to surrender was heard from the crowded decks of the brig.

In the open sea, and with no passengers on board, the captain of the Indiaman might have made some show of fight, but now resistance was out of the question. Some of the hands were aloft blocking yards and stays, others were over the side painting ship, some bending on the anchors and lightening up the cable. The 'tween decks, on which stood some long nine-pounder carronades, were lumbered up with passengers' luggage, whilst the poop was crowded with eager forms anxious to make out the man-of-war brig which was slipping through the water to speak to them.

The stern summons to surrender sent a thrill of excitement and of horror through the ship. For a few brief seconds the true purport of the Frenchman's demands were scarcely grasped, then, for an equally short space of time the thought flashed through the minds of all on board: With Old England on our lee, with her white cliffs standing high in the noonday glare, capture is impossible, escape certain.

"Square the main-yard, hands to those royal and top-

gallant halyards," was the captain's first order, and at the word all hands came tumbling down from aloft, or clambering up from the stages over the ship's sides, whilst the carpenter and some of the junior mates running aft, endeavored to cast loose some of the carronades in the waist of the ship, determined to make one effort at any rate, one big bid for freedom.

The main-yard swung slowly round, the royals and top-gallants were quickly sheeted home, and as the Indiaman gathered way upon her and gradually forged ahead, Leveillé fired a shotted gun across her bows, and then letting his own ship fall off, poured a broadside into the merchantman.

In another moment he had filled and was standing on parallel to the Indiaman, and his men merely waiting orders to fire their second broadside. On the merchantman all was disorder. With all the will in the world, it was impossible to bring her guns into action. The doors of the magazines were lumbered up with passengers' baggage, and valuable time was wasted ere a single round of ammunition could be obtained, port-fires were then wanting, and even the galley fire could not produce a hot iron for firing off the charge.

The first broadside of the *Vengeance*, purposely aimed high, had cut about the rigging and sails of the Indiaman, and the captain, seeing how unequal the combat would prove, and fearing for the lives of his many passengers, in the interests of humanity felt constrained to strike his flag. The second vessel made no attempt at resistance, and Leveillé, placing a strong crew on each of his prizes, personally escorted them into Dunkirk.

Some few weeks were occupied in refitting the *Vengeance*, furnishing her with heavier spars, and shifting

some of the nine-pounder guns from the captured Indiamen on to his own decks, in place of the six-pounders which formed her broadside pieces, so that it was not until the 3rd February, 1796, that Leveillé found himself ready to take the sea, this time with a heavier armament, a greater spread of canvas, and a far stronger crew.

The success which had crowned his first venture, had won for him no small notoriety in Dunkirk, and when Leveillé announced to the owners of the *Vengeance* that he should require 120 hands, one-sixth of whom were to be seamen borne on the rolls of the Inscription Maritime, these merchants, who had made such a handsome profit out of his first cruise, were ready enough to fall in with his views.

No difficulty was experienced in selecting twenty able seamen as the nucleus of his crew. Indeed, had he wished it, it would have been easy enough for Leveillé to ship ten or twenty times that number. But the navy of the young Republic had need of all the seamen she could find, and the officials at every port exercised a strict surveillance over every Corsair commissioned within their districts, so that the clause restricting the number of sailors to one-sixth the total crew was very difficult of evasion.

As to the remaining 100 hands, there were plenty of daring spirits loafing about the streets of Dunkirk, willing enough to ship under a popular commander. These were of all trades and of all professions, of all nations, and of all religions, and it required no little knowledge of character to choose the right men from the motley crowd, and no little force of character, after having chosen them, to keep them in order. As sailors, they were at first practically useless, but when once

they had got their sea-legs they were valuable enough in boarding a strange craft. Desperadoes, all of them, they fought for plunder, and they fought with fury; and the great majority, quickly falling into the rough and ready ways of a privateer's life, soon picked up the mechanical duties of seamanship, and in course of time became valuable sailors.

This second cruise was short enough. Standing up to the nor'ard, Leveillé sighted many craft, but these were flying neutral flags, and were in too close proximity to English cruisers for him to venture to show his true colors, and so the *Vengeance* once more made the Channel her cruising-ground.

On the 8th of February, at dawn, he found himself within gun-shot of a fine barque which was lazily running up Channel under her courses and topsails, the skipper evidently acting on the good old plan "more days, more dollars." In answer to the summoning gun she ran up English colors and stood unconcernedly on. The *Vengeance* replied by a shotted gun across the English barque's bows, at the same time displaying the tricolour from her mast-head,

The Englishman, a smart sailer, now learnt the true nature of her neighbour and made a gallant attempt at escape; sheeting home her top-gallant sails and loosening her main royal, she tried to show a clean pair of heels to the privateer, but the *Vengeance* could sail as well as most vessels that were to be found in the Channel, and she had gunners on board who had won the Communal prizes in the artillery competition on the Dunes. The English barque soon found that if she did escape, her escape would be due as much to luck as to good management.

Though the good management was all there, the luck

was found wanting. Shot after shot from the long twelve-pounder on the fo'csle of the *Vengeance* came whistling alongside the barque which, with every inch of canvas set, was tearing away to the English coast; but with all her spread of canvas she could not shake off her pursuer, nor did the shot from the little four-pounder carronades which were replying to the *Vengeance's* twelve-pounders, ever succeed in reaching the Frenchman. Still, a stern chase is a long chase, and every knot brought the Englishman one mile nearer home, every moment increased the chance of a friendly sail appearing on the offing.

Leveillé knew this full well, and his crew were equally alive to the necessity of putting an end to the chase; yet, though every shot fell either alongside the Englishman, or whistling overhead, plunged into the waters beyond her, she seemed to bear a charmed life, and hull and spar and rigging remained intact. Going forward, Leveillé encouraged his gun's crew by promises, and finally offered ten louis to the man who should dismast the enemy. The prize was won by a seaman named Cardon, who by a lucky shot struck the English barque just at the cap of the main-mast head, and cutting through the topmast, sent topsail, topgallant and royal yards in hopeless confusion on her deck.

A wild shout rose from the Frenchman's crew, it was answered by one of stern defiance from the barque, and it was clear that even now warm work would be required ere the *Vengeance* would be in full possession of the prize. As the privateer overhauled the Englishman and brought her broadside guns into play, she was answered with a very accurate and galling fire, and as she sheered up alongside with a view of carrying her by boarding, the resolute attitude of the English crew and

the murderous volleys of small arms poured in from a group of English soldiers on her decks, caused Leveillé to stand off out of musket-shot and recommence the artillery duel.

The fight was hopelessly unequal, and at noon, no sign of help being visible, his main-topmast and all its gear gone, fourteen of his crew badly hurt and his ship hulled in many places, the brave English captain reluctantly hauled down his colors. Leveillé was a brave man, and he could appreciate bravery in others, and when the fight was over he received the English crew with warmth and made his own doctor attend on their wounded.

The *Vengeance* had not come scathless out of the fray; two of her men had been killed and eight wounded by the musketry fire of the prize, and her foretop-sail-yard had been badly wounded by a four-pounder shot. Placing a prize-crew on board the *Eliza*, Leveillé stood by her until a spare topmast was fitted and sent up, and then escorted her into Dunkirk, reaching it on the 9th February, 1796. The speedy return to port of the *Vengeance*, with a richly-laden prize of 400 tons, was not merely a matter of congratulation in a pecuniary sense to both captain and owner, but at once placed Leveillé at the head of the privateer captains sailing out of Dunkirk.

It was the 20th of the month before the *Vengeance* was again fit for sea; a new fore-topsail-yard was necessary, and Leveillé thought it desirable to strengthen and to heighten the bulwarks round the waist of the ship, so as to afford his guns' crew more protection from the musketry fire of their opponents. This ever-watchful care for the safety of his men was not lost upon them, and whilst it rendered Leveillé the most

prize with eighty of his own men, he directed his second in command to cut the two ships apart and to stand after the brig, whilst he, in the *Coldstream*, attacked the brigantine.

It was a risky manœuvre; the whole sea was studded with sails, several of which were evidently bearing down to the sound of the guns, and in addition to this danger there were upwards of one hundred Englishmen on board the prize; but Leveillé never counted the risk; disarming his prisoners, he hurried them all below and clapped the hatches on them, and then stood on after the brigantine, which had passed them during the fight and was now about a mile to leeward.

The *Coldstream* proved a good sailer, and in less than a quarter of an hour was well within short range of the enemy, but Yarmouth was in sight and the brigantine carrying on all sail, strove to reach the friendly shelter of the English batteries. At the same time she returned the *Coldstream's* fire with vigour, but the big ship was sailing two fathoms for the little ship's one, and as Leveillé sheered up alongside and poured a broadside into the brigantine's hull, the captain saw further resistance was hopeless, though the possibility of recapture was by no means so, and in order to avoid further loss of life he struck his flag.

In a few minutes some thirty sturdy Frenchmen were on the new prize's decks, her own crew were hurried below and her course altered for Dunkirk. The *Vengeance* in the meantime had not been idle, for she was also seen standing away to the eastward with the tricolour flying from the peak of the brig.

Although all three vessels had been taken, danger was by no means past, the chase after the smaller craft had led the *Vengeance* and *Coldstream* within long

range of the Yarmouth batteries, and already some of the shots from the heavy guns on the works were ricochetting around them, and what was more serious still, three cutters were visible standing out of the harbour in pursuit of the privateer.

Signalling to the *Vengeance* to close with the *Coldstream*, Leveillé returned to his own ship, and ordered the masters of the three prize-crews to crowd on all sail for Ostend, the nearest port, whilst he determined to hold the cutters in check, and so save his prizes. How he succeeded is best told in his own words.

“At dawn, on the 23rd of February”—he wrote to Monsieur Barnet, his owner—“being about four leagues from Ostend, I noticed three English cruisers within short range, astern of me; they were evidently the same that we had seen the preceding evening stand out from Yarmouth roads. The slowness of my prizes had compelled me to reduce my own speed during the night, and now I was again compelled to shorten sail. I opened fire upon the leading cutter with my twelve-pounder stern gun; but notwithstanding this, the three craft pressed on to within musket-shot. I then saw they carried respectively, fourteen, twelve and ten cannons.

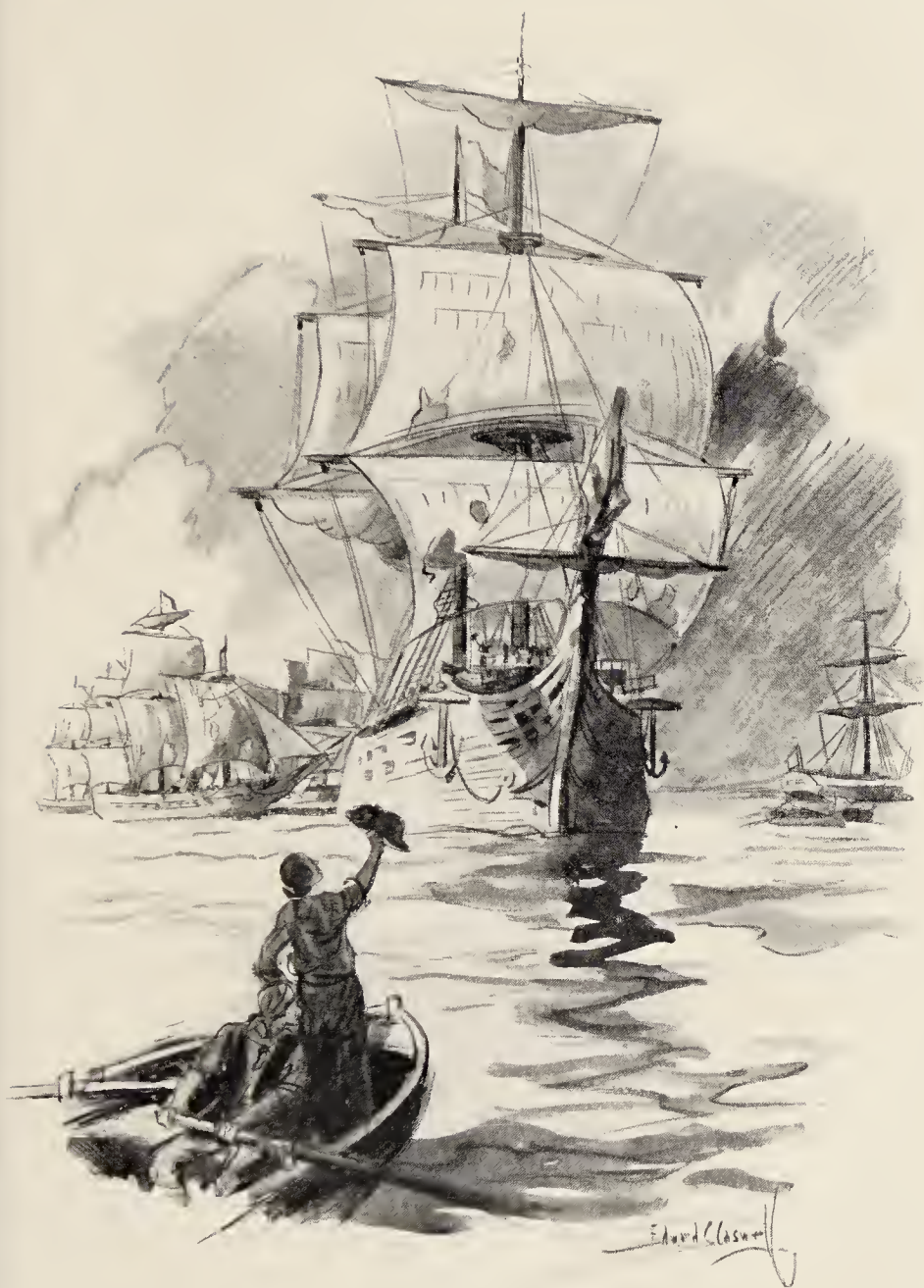
“Wishing to protect my prizes, and I seeing no French sail near enough to offer assistance, I signalled to the prize-masters to stand on to Ostend, and then falling off before the wind, I poured a broadside into the leading vessel which did much damage to her sail and rigging. As I filled again I gave her a well-aimed shot from my stern twelve-pounder. In a few moments I put the ship about again, and poured a broadside from my port guns into the second cutter. For three hours I followed this manœuvre, then seeing that my prizes were safe under the guns of Ostend, and having only thirty men

on board the *Vengeance*, not enough to warrant my attempting to board the well-manned Englishman, I stood on to port.

"The English cruisers suffered severely, their sails and rigging being especially damaged. You may judge of the continuity of the fire I kept up, when I tell you that I fired fifty-three rounds from my stern gun alone. All my officers and men showed a courage and coolness worthy of French Republicans, and when we were near enough to the slaves of St. George for them to hear us, we chilled their ardour with the cherished cry, 'Vive la République.' During this chase I suffered but one casualty, one man having his arm shattered at the shoulder by a round shot. The ship, however, was hulled on several occasions."

At mid-day the *Vengeance* entered the port followed by her three prizes. The entire population of Ostend had been watching the progress of the fight between the three cruisers and Leveillé's ship with the most intense interest, and as the Corsair with her short torn sails, and pitted hull and splintered bulwarks, stood in to the harbour, loud cries of "Vive la République—Vive la *Vengeance*—Vive Leveillé," went up from the hardy fishermen on the mole. The three English flags flew out in the breeze under the *Vengeance's* tricolour, whilst from the mizen-peak of the three prizes the French colors now were shown.

The prizes proved to be the *Coldstream*, 450 tons, laden with munitions of war, and carrying seventy-five soldiers for Lord Bridport's fleet; the *Duke of York*, 250 tons, also laden with ammunition and military effects, and the *Chancellor*, 300 tons, carrying coal for the fleet. All three prizes had suffered heavily in men, the one single round from the bow-chaser of the *Ven-*



At mid-day the Vengeance entered the port followed by her three prizes.



geance having killed and wounded over thirty men on the *Coldstream*.

On the 9th of March the *Vengeance* once more cleared out of Ostend. This time she stood down Channel, and on the 11th, when off the west of the Isle of Wight, overhauled a convoy which had just cleared out from Spithead. Taking advantage of the confusion invariably attendant in convoys during the first few hours at sea, Leveillé hoisting English colors, stood in amongst the sternmost ships, and noticing the slack supervision exercised by the English frigates escorting them, he determined as the sun went down to make a clean sweep of as many vessels as he could manage to board.

How this was carried out we have no means of knowing, but this we do know, that on the 13th of March the *Vengeance* reached Cherbourg, escorting five prizes, the *Rouen Packet*, 250 tons, and the *Nancy*, 260 tons, both laden with salt pork and biscuit; the *Mayflower*, 230, corn, flour and biscuit; the *Intent* sloop, 190 tons, iron and zinc; the *Friendship* sloop, 170 tons, sugar, tea, and other stores.

On the 25th of March, having arranged about the sale of his prizes and given his men a run ashore, Leveillé once more quitted port and stood over towards the Isle of Wight. That evening he captured a fine brig, the *Fortune*, of 280 tons, but being surprised by a couple of smart corvettes, was obliged to abandon her, not before he had removed her crew and set her on fire. On the 27th, off the Lizard, the *Morgan*, a brig of 210 tons, laden with limestone, was captured; and the same evening a three-masted brigantine, the *Dædalus*, of 220 tons, with fruit and olive oil from the Levant, also fell into his hands.

Two days later the *Fortitude* barque, of 430 tons,

from the West Indies, was carried by boarding, the *Vengeance* losing one killed and seven wounded in the fight. The richness of the prize, which was fully laden with sugar, rum, and precious woods from the West Indies, more than compensated for the risk attending her capture. Sending the *Fortitude* under a prize-crew to Cherbourg, Leveillé still stood to the westward, and on the last day of March, off the Scillies, was fortunate enough to fall in with and capture, after the exchange of a few rounds, the *Friendship*, another fine West Indiaman of 550 tons.

His crew was now so weakened by the many hands sent away in prizes, and he had so many prisoners on his own decks, that Leveillé determined to bear up to Dunkirk; there he remained ashore for six months. Either the owners of the *Vengeance* were satisfied with their profits and did not care to run further risk, or Leveillé, corsairlike, was seeing how well he could run through his money ashore, for we lose sight of him until early in November, when we find the *Vengeance* escorting into Brest the English barque *Brinhall*, 400 tons, and a vessel under Danish colors, the *Three Sisters*, both carrying English Government stores, and a few days later the *Eagle*, a collier brig, and the *Thomas*, a small brigantine, laden with salt, were both escorted by the *Vengeance* into Lorient.

And now Leveillé had won more than a mere local reputation; his name was known in every port in Northern France, from Dunkirk to Brest, and into most of them the *Vengeance* had convoyed some of her prizes. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the members of the Directory should have looked on Leveillé as being capable of better things than the command of a mere

Corsair, and should have endeavoured to secure his services for the Republican Navy.

To Leveillé himself the change was by no means welcome. In the *Vengeance* his authority was supreme, he was free to cruise north or south, east or west, at his pleasure, he could avoid combat with a superior force, and so long as good luck followed him he was sure of amassing a considerable fortune. He ran the risk of seeing the English hulks, it is true, but such a fate was as likely to befall him when serving in a man-of-war, and there, too, his freedom was curtailed, for he was compelled to sail in accordance with his sailing orders, and could not avoid engaging a more powerful antagonist without incurring the risk of censure, perhaps of ruin.

Much as he would have preferred remaining in the *Vengeance*, Leveillé felt, in the then unsatisfactory condition of the country, that it was scarcely politic to avoid government employ when offered it. Espionage was at its height, the guillotine was by no means idle, and suspicion would most certainly attach to the man who seemed to avoid the service of the state. Leveillé, therefore, with a heavy heart, felt constrained to accept the position of *Lieutenant de Vaisseau* on board the frigate *Terpsichore*, then lying in Lorient.

His position on board this ship was not a pleasant one. The majority of the crew were Bretons, many of whom were heart and soul with Georges and Laroche-jacquelin, for the whole population of the coast from St. Briec to Brest were wrath with the Republic and with reason; their brethren had been massacred after the shamefully perfidious conduct of the Directory to the prisoners of Quiberon, and their country had been laid waste by Republican troops. It was well known

that the crew of the *Terpsichore*, aye, and of many another vessel over whose decks flew the tricolour, would never fire a shot in defence of the colors they abhorred so cordially.

The spirit of disaffection was present too amongst the officers of the fleet, and Leveillé was made to feel that he was not a heaven-born member of the navy. Although a Republican heart and soul, he was not made of that baser stuff which revelled in bloodshed and massacre, and though many an opportunity was doubtless given him of working evil to those amongst whom he was thrown, the brave young Corsair of Dunkirk avoided all attempts to retaliate on his messmates for their treatment of him, and merely busied himself in efforts to shake himself free from his present surroundings and to embark on his old career.

Three years passed ere he was able to accomplish his desires, and then, through the influence of some new-found friends at Lorient, Leveillé was introduced to a firm of Bordeaux ship-owners who were anxious to fit out a craft for privateering in the western seas. Obtaining leave to visit Bordeaux, Leveillé soon completed his negotiations with these gentlemen, and they, after some difficulty, succeeded in procuring Leveillé's discharge from the Navy and inducing the Minister of Marine to grant him letters of marque for the vessel they were fitting out.

Leveillé's new command was a fine full-rigged ship, carrying thirty-six guns and a crew of 250 men. In the letter of marque appointing him to the *Psyche*, she was designated by the Minister of Marine as a "*frégate corsair*." She had been fitted out under the personal supervision of Leveillé, whose anxiety that his ship should be well-found and perfectly equipped led him

into an expenditure which rather frightened the worthy merchants of Bordeaux.

The *Psyche* carried one long eighteen-pounder on her forecastle and two twelve-pounders and a second long eighteen on her poop; in the waist of her upper deck were eight nine-pounders, whilst on her main-deck were twenty-four twelve-pounders. In point of weight of metal she was one of the most formidable craft of her size afloat, and was certain to prove a very formidable opponent to any frigate that might fall in with her.

Her crew consisted of Dunkirk fishermen, brought round from that port by Leveillé himself, and some few Basque sailors, but he also carried forty trained seamen borne on the rolls of the *Inscription Maritime*; some of these had sailed in the *Vengeance* with Leveillé, others had been with him in the *Terpsichore* at Lorient; all had been selected on account of their sailorlike qualities and steadiness. With a couple of hundred men on board unaccustomed to the working of a big ship, Leveillé had felt that he would need a sprinkling of good reliable hands to form the basis of his crew.

On leaving Bordeaux Leveillé steered a course for the Western Islands; there he hoped to fall in with some of those large East Indiamen among whom Surcouf and his fellows had been working such havoc in the Bay of Bengal. These vessels, in their homeward voyage from Calcutta, generally made the longitude of the Azores before running down their easting to the Bay of Biscay, and by cruising in these latitudes Leveillé promised the *Psyche* a succession of rich prize-money. His first capture proved but an indifferent one, a small brigantine of 110 tons, the *Sally*, bound from Bristol to the West coast of Africa; being picked up when three days from port, a prize-crew was put on board her,

with orders to work her into Teneriffe, which port she reached in safety, and she was finally sold there for the sum of two thousand pounds.

Three days later (25th February, 1799), Leveillé made a second prize, the brig *Jeune Lyonnaise*, a French-built craft, captured by the English in the West Indies, and now carrying a valuable cargo from London to Jamaica; this vessel was taken within sight of the island of Madeira, and leaving four of her own crew on board, Leveillé sent six French seamen to take her into Teneriffe. She was sold there for 8000*l*. On the 2nd March the *Alfred*, of London, bound to Carthagena, and on the 3rd the *Whitworth*, from Madeira to London, with wine, fell prizes to the *Psyche*.

On the following day the full routine of capturing prizes unable to make any resistance met with welcome variation. At 6 a.m., a squadron of four ships were seen bearing down on the *Psyche*; they were heavily sparred, and evidently ships of war, but it was not until they approached to almost within gunshot that Leveillé could make out they were Portuguese.

Although out-numbered, Leveillé felt so confident in the superior handiness and metal of his vessel, and so thoroughly satisfied that his men would do him justice on this occasion, that he made no effort to avoid the combat, but in answer to the summoning gun of the leading Portuguese man-of-war, ran up French colors and continued on his course; the summoning gun was followed by a ball which, cutting up the water under the dolphin-striker of the *Psyche*, was a summary signal for her to heave to.

"Lie close, my men, and aim only at the masts and spars of the flagship," shouted Leveillé, and as the puff of a third discharge was seen curling away from the

fo'cslc of the Portuguese frigate Leveillé gave the word, and instantly eighteen heavy shot were hurtling through the rigging of the astonished enemy; the first broadside was followed up with a succession of admirably served shots from the heavy guns on the poop of the *Psyche*, which at once bore down on the *Amavel Luisa* with a view of finishing the combat by carrying her by boarding.

But the Portuguese had no stomach for this kind of fighting; as the *Psyche* ranged up alongside, the frigate fell off to avoid the grappling-irons which the Corsair crew endeavoured to throw on board, but she received the full force of a broadside at short pistol range, which tearing through the bulwarks dismounted some of the upper deck guns, and killed fourteen of her crew. Passing on, the *Psyche* treated the second Portuguese vessel to her starboard broadside, and then putting his ship about Leveillé stood on after the crippled vessels, to repeat the same manœuvre. This time he was fortunate enough to grapple with the *Amavel Luisa* and throwing 100 of his men over her sides, soon caused the captain to strike his flag.

The capture of one vessel of war carrying twenty-four guns was but a part of the day's work; hastily disarming the crew and driving them below, Leveillé left a prize-crew of fifty men on the ship, and stood on after the largest of the remaining three; she had been much cut about in her top-hamper by the *Psyche's* broadsides and was overhauled in a very few minutes.

Seeing that she was now entirely overmatched, her captain likewise struck his flag, and Leveillé, shifting her officers on to his own ship, placed a strong crew on board her and stood on in chase of the other vessels, which, poor sailers as they were, had succeeded in put-

ting some miles between themselves and the Frenchman. It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon ere the *Psyche* overhauled these two vessels, which made no efforts at resistance, but hauled down their flags directly they found themselves within range of the *Psyche's* heavy guns.

Leveillé had so weakened his ship's company in despatching prize-crews in the four prizes already despatched to Teneriffe and in the two ships of war already taken, that he determined to sink his two last prizes; but the weather being calm he removed their brass guns, some of their spare spars and gear, food, powder, and over 140,000 francs in specie on board the *Psyche* before firing them. He then stood back to the two vessels now far astern; these proved to be the *Armavel Luisa*, 20, *Activo*, 16, whilst the burnt ships were the *Amizade*, 12, and *Aurore*, 10, all four bound from Lisbon to Pernambuco, carrying government stores, and under charter to the Portuguese Admiralty, whose flag they were flying.

The *Psyche* had not come scathless out of the fray, her mizen-topmast and her main-yard had been badly hurt, her sails had been much cut about, and two of her guns had burst during the fight; these last were replaced by fine brass twelve-pounders from the *Amizade*, and her wounded spars were quickly sent down, others from the Portuguese prizes being sent up in their places. All night long prisoners and crew toiled at the task of refitting the *Psyche* and her prizes, new sails were bent in lieu of those cut to ribbands during the fight, fresh running gear was rove, and by the following morning the three craft bore few traces of the struggle they had been engaged in on the preceding day.

Leveillé now determined to bear up for Teneriffe,

there to get rid of his prizes, and pick up his prize-crews. The voyage was one presenting many risks, numerous English cruisers were in these waters, and every neutral port was closely watched. Still it was easier to reach Teneriffe than Bordeaux, and accordingly the *Psyche*, with her two consorts, shaped her course for that island.

Light winds and calms prolonged the voyage, and it was not until the 18th of March that the island hove in sight. Even now it was a matter of doubt whether it would be advisable to try and force an entrance, or to bear away for a French port; for Leveillé had learnt from a passing vessel whom he had spoken under Portuguese colors that the English frigate *Métisse* was cruising on and off the island, waiting the arrival of a French Corsair, whose prizes were already in the port. On nearing the island, the spars of the English frigate were distinctly discernible against the dark hill-sides, and as soon as she made out the approaching squadron her sails were sheeted home, and she stood out to meet them.

Leveillé's mind was soon made up. His own ship was an exceedingly fast sailer, and having only been some forty-five days at sea, her bottom was clean enough to enable her to keep up her greatest speed. He therefore determined to entice the *Métisse* away from his prizes, or to fight her should she refuse to be enticed.

He ordered the commanders of the *Amavel Luisa* and *Activo* to stand in to the land, coast along the shore, and then enter the port of St. Croix, whilst he himself bore straight down on the *Métisse*. Not having the English account of the succeeding fight, I must confine myself to Leveillé's own description, which is bald enough. The two vessels merely exchanged a couple of broad-

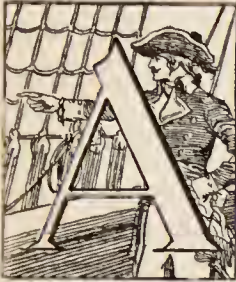
sides, when the *Psyche*, keeping away from the Englishman to avoid being boarded, succeeded in gaining the port without being struck.

At St. Croix, Leveillé got rid of his prizes, which realized the large sum of 98,000*l.*, and then, in obedience to instructions received from home, he carried the *Psyche* back to Bordeaux, and then paid her off. The peace of Amiens shortly supervened, and Leveillé, finding his occupation gone, returned to Dunkirk.

From this time all trace of him is lost. On the outbreak of the war no mention is made of him as applying for a letter of marque, nor do the archives of Dunkirk make any reference to his name. I have included him amongst the *Corsairs of France*, not because he achieved greatness like Jean Bart or Duguay Trouin, but merely to show what terrible damage was inflicted on British commerce by men who, devoid of all the higher forms of naval education, knew how to reef and steer, how to work a dead reckoning, and how to serve a gun.

CHAPTER VII

Robert Surcouf of St. Malo—1773-1827



AMONG the many Corsairs who gained wealth and renown in the last great war that was waged between France and England, the name of Robert Surcouf stands out pre-eminent. St. Malo, the Corsair city, claims him as her child—and with reason. Born and bred and educated a Malouine, Surcouf was descended from some of the worthiest bourgeois families that St. Malo owns.

On his father's side, he was descended from another Robert Surcouf, who, in the early days of the eighteenth century, had commanded a vessel carrying letters of marque in the expedition which M. Chambert had led to Peru; on his mother's side he was closely connected with the Porcons de la Barbinais, who had made their wealth in the *guerre de course*, and distantly with that *preux chevalier* of all Malouines, Duguay Trouin. Small wonder, then, that Robert Surcouf should have taken kindly to the sea—there are few Malouines who do not—or that his thoughts should have centered more on the fame to be gained from privateering rather than on the fortunes to be amassed by trading.

I may pass over his early life, though his admiring biographer, M. Cunat of St. Malo, dwells lovingly on the escapades of the high-spirited lad, who seems to have rivalled his connection, Duguay Trouin, in his hatred of school discipline, and in the frequency of his assaults on his preceptors. He was evidently unsuited

for any of the learned professions; he was equally averse to entering upon commercial pursuits, and his parents, with some reluctance, felt compelled to give their sanction to his going to sea.

At the age of fifteen, then, in the year 1789, he embarked as a volunteer on board the *Aurore*, a vessel of 700 tons, bound for the East Indies. An old friend of the Surcouf family, one Tardivet by name, commanded the *Aurore*, and he undertook to instruct the lad in the mysteries of navigation. Ill-fortune intervened in the course of the cruise to make young Surcouf cruelly acquainted with the rudest side of his profession. The *Aurore*, honest trader when honest cargoes were to be found, was fitted for more than the East Indian commerce. The isles of France and of Bourbon were but centres of that great slave trade which was in those days openly carried on between the coast of Africa and the East Indies.

In the very first year of his apprenticeship, the *Aurore*, with a cargo of close on 600 slaves on board, was caught in a cyclone off Madagascar, and being driven far to the westward, was dashed ashore on the coast of Africa, the captain and major part of the crew, with some women and children who mercifully had not been fettered in the 'tween decks, were saved, but over four hundred miserable creatures perished of hunger or of suffocation in the battened-down craft.

It was some weeks ere the hull was cleared of the bodies which lay festering in the hold, and when this work was at last accomplished, Tardivet found that the *Aurore* was incapable of repair. He accordingly chartered a native dhow to carry himself and crew to the Mauritius, and there succeeded in obtaining command

of another vessel, the *Revanche*, and in her continued his nefarious traffic.

Surcouf had so distinguished himself during the shipwreck of the *Aurore*, and in the subsequent ghastly task of clearing her hold, that Tardivet, gauging his real worth, gave him a subordinate post in his new craft. The ill-fortune that attended the *Aurore* seemed transferred to the *Revanche*; contrary winds and heavy gales drove her out of her course, and in a voyage from the Isle of France to Mahé in the East Indies, she was compelled to put into Singapore for refit. Thence Surcouf worked his way back to Bourbon, and for some few months was engaged in trade between that island and Madagascar—a trade which consisted in importing “free laborers” from the great African island to the French plantations on Bourbon and Mauritius.

Surcouf saw the profit that was to be derived from this traffic, and he determined no longer to be a mere tool in the amassing of wealth for others. He had purchased his experience dearly enough, and was well able to exercise an independent command, but his influence in the colonies was small, and he had no capital behind him. If his influence in Réunion was limited, it was far otherwise in St. Malo, and in 1792 Surcouf worked his passage home, and succeeded in inducing his friends to fit out a small brig, the *Créole*, and to entrust him with its command.

In the *Créole* Surcouf made many successful voyages between the French islands and Madagascar, and laid the foundations of that immense fortune which rumour asserts he amassed in his early years.

The *Créole* was nothing more nor less than a slaver—a slaver pure and simple—and when in 1789, the Convention thundered forth its Declaration on the

Rights of Man, the Governor of Réunion had been compelled to declare the slave trade illegal; yet to suppress it would have been to bring ruin upon the French settlers in the island, to put a stop to the sugar industry, and to earn the hostility of the hundreds, nay thousands of his fellow-countrymen who were directly or indirectly engaged in the traffic. What the governor was unable or unwilling to do, was performed very effectually by the English blockading squadron, for a time, at any rate, but the French had too much at stake to permit the blockade to be carried on for any lengthy period without making an effort to relieve themselves.

The British Admiralty, unfortunately, were not in a position to detach a sufficient force to the East Indies to perform the necessary task of effectually nipping in the bud the corsairlike propensities of the slavers of the French islands, and of keeping open their main ocean highway between the Cape of Good Hope and Calcutta. The smallness of the force keeping watch and ward over them induced the French to try conclusions with the British squadron, and Surcouf, compelled by the blockade to lead an idle life, volunteered with his crew to serve in any capacity the governor might denote.

Two French frigates, the *Cybèle* and *Prudente*, lay in the harbour, and these being reinforced by two powerfully-armed merchantmen, the *Coureur* and *Jean Bart*, the squadron stood out to attack the English vessels; these comprised the *Centurion*, 50, and *Diomedé*, 44. This was Surcouf's first engagement, and, as such, is deserving of record. In it he played but a subordinate part, for he was but a volunteer on the *Jean Bart* privateer, but it was the turning-point in his career; he resolved then and there to abandon trading and take to the *guerre de course*. The action was discreditable enough to the

English; the blockade was raised, and the isles of France and of Bourbon henceforth became veritable nests of Corsairs, which carried destruction to Britain's Eastern commerce from the Straits of Sunda to the Red Sea.

Anxious as Surcouf was to embark on privateering, there were yet difficulties in his way, difficulties which time, it is true, could overcome—time and money. His youth stood in his way, the caution-money that the government insisted should be deposited ere a commission or letter of marque could be granted, and the fact that a large number of vessels were, at the moment of the raising of the blockade, ready to start forth on their war of retaliation on English shipping, were also impediments to his at once obtaining his commission, and the young commander was compelled to turn slaver once more, in order to raise the funds wherewith to purchase the right to privateer.

Even slavery had its risks, and these risks doubtless lent a charm to the occupation. There was the off-chance of a brush with an English cruiser; I say off-chance advisedly, for England's force in the Indian Ocean was so reduced that the prospect of capture at the hands of an English cruiser was remote indeed. Then there was the prospect, by no means so remote, of prosecution and confiscation at the hands of the French Government. Whether it was that Surcouf too openly defied the law, or whether his largesses to government officials were not substantial enough, it is impossible to determine; one thing is clear enough, that whilst certain owners were permitted to carry on the slave trade with impunity, orders were suddenly issued to the harbour authorities, both in the Isle of France and of Bourbon, to seize the *Créole* and to arrest her commander.

Surcouf received ample warning; he was on a slav-

ing excursion when the order was issued, and his agent in Réunion at once sent word to Madagascar, warning him of the danger awaiting him at the termination of his cruise. The expected had now occurred, and Surcouf had long made up his mind on the course to be pursued; he quietly shipped his slaves, stood away to the eastward, landed them in the dead of night at Grande Chaloupe, where he had instructed his agent to make preparations for their reception, and then again weighing anchor, calmly entered the harbour of St. Paul's. The police were ready for him, and before his crew had removed all traces of the slaves from the 'tween decks, the Commissaire and a couple of assistants boarded the *Créole* with an invitation to its commander to accompany them ashore.

Proof there was and in plenty of Surcouf's real trade—he made no attempt to disavow it, the long rows of leg-irons fitted down below, the double decks, between which the miserable men were so cruelly forced, the large galley, with its immense cauldrons for cooking their daily allowance of rice; the powerful well-armed crew, and above all the sickening stench of human ordure, enabled the Commissaire to draw up a most damning report against the accused.

But Surcouf was a man of ready wit and many resources, or he would never have raised himself to the position he afterwards attained, and he was by no means inclined to accept the Commissaire's genial invitation without some attempt to evade the law.

The Commissaire, with all the pomposity of the subordinate official, requested to be shown into the cabin in order that he might draw out the *procès verbal* which must be read to the accused ere he left the ship; and Surcouf, with true French politeness, showed the official



Landed them in the dead of night at Grande Chaloupe.



down below, and there provided him with such luxuries as the *Créole* could afford; the cook was requested to bring in breakfast, and the Commissaire and his assistants accepted Surcouf's invitation to share it with him.

In the meantime the young captain had contrived to make matters clear to his lieutenants, and they to the seamen under them. Some plausible excuse was found for despatching the police-boat ashore, then the cable was quietly cut, and as quietly the sails sheeted home; gently the *Créole* slipped through the water, passing close under the rails of French vessels of war, the crews of which lazily wondered why the little craft was making such a short stay in the harbour; gradually she got more weigh on her, and in a few anxious moments was beyond the range of the guns of the forts, and then, as she cleared the bay and felt the full force of the trade-winds, she leaned over to the breeze and plunged into the open sea.

And now the motion of the *Créole*, for she was "flying light," caused the good Commissaire and his comrades some uneasiness; they had been well plied with generous wine during their hasty meal, but when they rushed on deck and saw the island rapidly growing more distant they at once realized the trick that had been played on them, but even then they barely realized that Surcouf would dare to disobey the orders of a Republican official. The Commissaire ordered Surcouf to put the vessel about instantly, and to return to St. Paul's, threatening him with the direst penalties of the law in the event of refusal.

Little did he know the sort of man he had to deal with; Surcouf quietly answered that it was just for the purpose of keeping out of the clutches of the law he had taken upon himself to escape from the island, and that

he intended standing over to the coast of Africa for another cargo of slaves, and furthermore he meant to land Monsieur le Commissaire and his colleagues on the Dark Continent, among the negroes they loved so well; in the meantime the *Créole* was at the disposition of the Republican officials, and the steward would attend to their every order.

Ere night fell the island was lost to view, and as Surcouf had no intention of taking a longer cruise than necessary, he hove to, in the hopes that his unwilling passengers would come to reason in the morning. Throughout the night the wind blew fresh and the *Créole* made as bad weather of it as she was able. With the fear of death before his eyes, the worthy Commissaire listened to the relentless Surcouf's proposals, and destroying the original report as to the damning evidence against the *Créole*, he now drew up another, in which he asserted that having made a careful examination of the ship and her fittings he was quite convinced that the allegations made, that she was engaged in the slave trade, were perfectly unfounded; and that he was the more able to assert this, as, owing to an accident to the cable when he was examining the vessel, she had been carried out to sea, and that he consequently had spent some eight days in the company of the citizen Surcouf, who was a brave and honorable man.

Surcouf, however, was not prepared to let his new-found friends off so easily as they desired; he pretended that adverse winds compelled him to bear up for Réunion, where he landed them a week later; then, not caring to run any more risks at the hands of the colonial authorities, he deemed it wiser to enter into an arrangement with some of the leading Government officials in the island; this secured him, at any rate so long as these

gentlemen remained in power, from any penalties he might become liable to, but it also left him reduced in purse, and realizing that larger fortunes were to be made from privateering than from slaving, Surcouf determined on entering upon a new career.

For some reason which his biographer Cunat thinks fit to suppress, the Governor of Réunion refused to grant Surcouf letters of marque. Thus his first voyages, carried on without the necessary commission, can only be characterized as mere filibustering expeditions, and during them Surcouf and his men were undoubtedly laying themselves open to the risk of being treated as pirates. The young commander—who was only in his twenty-second year—was compelled to set sail as it were under false colors and to conceal his real design even from his own crew.

The *Créole* was utterly unsuited to the task Surcouf had in view, and his means, crippled as they had been by his efforts to win over to his side some of the leading Government officials, did not permit him to purchase or charter a craft which should enable him to carry out in their entirety his original designs. He was forced to content himself with a smart-sailing colonial-built craft, the *Modeste*; she measured but 180 tons, and her crew numbered but thirty men; her armament, limited by the edicts which governed the armaments of merchantmen and privateers, consisted of four six-pounder cannon.

Unfurnished with letters of marque, Surcouf was compelled to combine trade with privateering; indeed he was forced to register his new vessel, which he rechristened the *Emilie*, as a merchantman; his armament was permitted for purposes of defence only. France and England being at war, every merchant-vessel was al-

lowed and expected to make arrangements for her own defence.

On the 3rd September, 1795, Surcouf left the port of St. Denis for the Seychelles, having been chartered to carry a cargo of rice and turtles thence to Réunion; but on the 15th of the month two large English vessels were observed approaching the harbour, and Surcouf, who had already commenced to fill up with rice, cut his cables and stood away to the eastward to avoid them. At the Seychelles he had shipped some more hands, and the day after leaving the island he determined on announcing his real purpose to his crew.

It was received with ringing acclamations, and convinced that his men were of a stamp to stand by him in the event of fighting being unavoidable, Surcouf, thinking the neighbourhood of the Seychelles unsafe, crossed the Indian Ocean and cruised for close on three months in the neighbourhood of the Andamans and of Sumatra. But one prize fell to his lot, the *Penguin*, a timber-laden ship from Burmah, and placing a prize-crew on board her, he despatched her to the Isle of France.

His next prize was a more valuable one. A Dutch vessel, homeward bound with gold bars to the value of 15,000*l.*, 800 tons of rice, 200 tons of pepper, a large quantity of sugar, was picked up and sent into the Isle of France. Such a capture placed captain and crew on a different footing.

And now Surcouf's career was to commence in earnest, he felt he had got his men in hand, and that mutual confidence existed between them; he accordingly, risking all chance of capture, bore away to the Sandheads and made a bold bid to cut in at the trade of Calcutta. Nor was he unsuccessful. Unsuccessful! His success was only paralleled by his audacity.

On the morning of the 19th January, 1796, his look-outs signalled three sail, and on the *Emilie* coming up with them they proved to be a couple of vessels laden with rice, under charge of a pilot brig, proceeding to Calcutta. Flying the English colors, Surcouf succeeded in getting alongside the brig, which with its crew of Lascars was little prepared to offer any resistance; she surrendered on the first shot from the *Emilie*, and the other two craft, the *Russell* and *Sam Borelase*, at once followed her example. The pilot brig, like all vessels of her class, was a stoutly-built, fast-sailing craft, far better suited for Surcouf's requirements than the *Emilie*, and his resolution was soon taken to shift his flag (?) from the latter vessel, whose bottom was very foul from long cruising in eastern waters; he therefore placed prize-crews on board the *Russell* and *Sam Borelase*, and despatched them to the Isle of France under convoy of the *Emilie*.

As his prizes were all manned by Lascars, with but a sprinkling of European officers, Surcouf's own crew was not much weakened by this proceeding, and it is pretty certain that on every prize he took he found one or more sailors of divers nationalities willing enough to exchange the monotony of serving before the mast in an Indian trader for the excitement and prospect of prize-money to be found on a corsair.

The guns and stores of the *Emilie* being shifted to the pilot brig, Surcouf was ready for a fresh cruise; he christened his new craft the *Cartier*, after another famous Malouine, Jacques Cartier, the founder of Newfoundland. On the 28th January, about daybreak, Surcouf fell in with and captured the *Diana*, a large vessel of about 800 tons, laden with rice. The *Diana* had a proportion of English in her complement, they were,

however, prepared to offer no resistance to the *Cartier*; but Surcouf, whose crew now numbered only some five-and-twenty men, felt it would be inadvisable to attempt to carry her into the Isle of France with the aid of the ordinary prize-crew, and he determined to convoy her to the island himself.

His plans were interrupted in a more pleasant manner than he had anticipated. On the following day, running down the Orissa coast, he sighted a large vessel lying at anchor, and he judged it worth his while to make the attempt to cut her out. The English colors flew out at the peak, and from her trim appearance and well-squared yards there was but little doubt she carried an English crew. Through her ports peered the muzzle of many a gun, and Surcouf felt that the task before him was one that would call forth the mettle of his men.

The crew of the *Emilie* had been reinforced by a number of Lascars from the *Cartier*, good sailors as the great steamship companies know, but not men on whom the stout *Malouine* could depend in a fight; still they enabled Surcouf to utilize all his men for fighting purposes, and their presence consequently was an unmixed blessing. The approach of the brig caused no uneasiness to the Englishmen; she was at once recognized as a Calcutta pilot, and there was no necessity for Surcouf to throw out English colors in order to deceive his prey. It was past noon ere the *Cartier* ran alongside the *Triton*; crew and passengers were below having their dinner, and the few men on deck little troubled themselves as to the near approach of the brig, above whose bulworks peered the heads of some fifteen or twenty Lascars.

Surcouf took in the situation at a glance; quickly running the *Cartier* alongside, he dashed on board the

Englishman at the head of but nineteen boarders, and ere the watch on deck could rush to their arms they were overpowered, the hatches secured, port halyards cut, and the English absolutely prisoners on board their own vessel. A slight attempt at defence was easily quelled, for slewing round one of the quarter-deck guns in the direction of the poop Surcouf threatened to fire unless all attempts at resistance immediately ceased.

The captain was powerless; it is true he had close on 150 men on board, but he had many women and children; his vessel was a merchantman pure and simple, his crew untrained, his decks cumbered with cargo, and all he could have hoped for would have been to drive the Frenchmen on to their own vessel after a stubborn fight, in which many lives would most undoubtedly have been lost. Yet the captain, in face of all these probabilities, did make a gallant effort to save his ship. At the head of a small band of officers and passengers as gallant as himself, he sallied out of the poop and made one bold bid for freedom.

It was not to be. The captain himself, a brave young midshipman, an officer of the army (a passenger on board) and a couple of seamen were killed, some half-dozen men wounded, and then the chief officer, seeing further resistance useless, unconditionally surrendered the ship. She proved to be the *Triton*, carrying twenty-six guns and a valuable cargo, but the multitude of her prisoners rendered her an awkward prize, and Surcouf judged it expedient to release the *Diana* on her captain giving a bond for her ransom, to transfer the crew and passengers of the *Triton* to her and then to make his way in the last named ship to the Mauritius.

This, unfortunately, for a time at any rate, seemed the only profit Surcouf was to make out of his marvel-

lously successful cruise, for on reaching the Isle of France, the Governor, Monsieur Malartie, who had always shown himself hostile to Surcouf, refused, as indeed he was perfectly justified in doing, to recognize the legality of his proceedings, and laid claim, on behalf of the Republic, to the prizes captured. In point of fact, Surcouf, up to now, was a pirate pure and simple, and had he been captured in the course of this cruise would have been liable to death.

Letters of marque were recognized by all civilized nations, their holders conformed to certain authorized rules, and they were treated on capture as *bonâ fide* belligerents, but for a private individual to roam the seas as an ocean free-lance was a course deserving of condign punishment, and much as we may admire Surcouf's gallantry and resource, the illegality of his conduct admits of no question.

The *Cartier*, less fortunate than the *Triton*, was captured on her voyage to the Isle of France by H.M.S *Victorious*, 74, so that, on reaching that island, Surcouf found only the *Penguin*, *Russell*, and *Sam Borlase* prizes, with his original craft, the *Emilie*. The owners of the *Emilie* very naturally supported Surcouf's claim to the prizes, but the governor was inexorable. The *Emilie* carried no letter of marque; she cleared for a voyage to the Seychelles, and the capture of the *Penguin* off the Andamans, of the *Russell* and *Sam Borlase* off the Sandheads, and of the *Triton* in Balasore Roads, were acts unjustifiable by any law. It was true that the arrival of the rice-ships had saved the island from distress, but that had nothing to do with the law of the case; Surcouf's conduct had been distinctly illegal, and any captures made by him were the property of the state.

There was a strong party in the island, however, who thought otherwise, and this party was headed by those members of Government to whose support Surcouf owed his immunity from punishment in the matter of the escapade with the commissaire of police. Fortified with the opinion of these gentlemen, Surcouf determined to proceed himself to France, and personally to lay his case before the Directory, who, anxious to encourage all blows made at English commerce, partially reversed the decision of the Colonial Executive, and granted the owners of the *Emilie* one-third of the value of the prizes taken. Surcouf's own share, it is said, amounted to 27,000*l*.

The question of legalizing the action of the *Emilie* opened up very wide issues; that Surcouf's conduct was diametrically opposed to the Law of Nations is incontestable, but the France of those days cared little about such matters. The Corps Législatif showed themselves at the outset desirous to put a very liberal construction on Surcouf's actions. He was fighting the common enemy, and following in the steps of Jean Bart and Duguay Trouin. The mere formality of a commission as a privateer was wanting, it is true, but he had actually applied for that commission, and his application had been refused. The whole matter was referred to a small committee, consisting of the citizens Villaret-Joyeuse, Boissy-Anglas, and Mersau. Their report is to be found in the Bibliothèque, Histoire de la Révolution (Marine, 4, 5, 6). It was strongly in favour of rewarding Surcouf and his brave companions.

In face of such a recommendation, it is not surprising that the crew of the *Emilie* were substantially rewarded for their labors.

Many months and much money were expended ere

this satisfactory decision was arrived at; in the meantime Surcouf was enslaved in the meshes of a fair Bretonne, Marie Blaize, and evinced small anxiety to resume his dangerous calling. The Blaizes to this day are renowned in Northern Brittany for their beauty, and if the Marie Blaize who led Surcouf captive was like some of her name whose successes on similar occasions are of more recent date, Surcouf's anxiety for a quiet life is not to be wondered at. Still it was not to be indulged at this early period of his career. His share of the large sum made by his cruise in the *Emilie* was not sufficient to satisfy the aspirations of Mademoiselle Marie Blaize, and in July, 1798, Surcouf was once more outward bound.

His successes in the Indian seas had found a cordial echo in the minds of the Breton *armateurs*, and directly it was known that Robert Surcouf, of St. Malo, was willing to accept a command, offers of one were not wanting. This time he sailed from Nantes in a vessel specially built for speed; she was named the *Clarisse*, and carried a crew of one hundred and forty stout Bretons, men of Surcouf's own kidney, hailing from the many seaports in that rocky stretch of land between Morlaix and the Rance. Her armament consisted of fourteen guns, mostly long twelve-pounders, and her chief officer was Robert's second brother, Nicholas, a smart and gallant sailor.

When crossing the line, the *Clarisse* fell in with a large Indiaman, but Surcouf found that she was more than a match for the little *Clarisse*, and after an action of some hours, the Frenchman was glad to escape with the loss of her fore-topmast. The Indiaman carried six-and-twenty guns, and her crew was doubtless as numerous as that of the *Clarisse*, so that small credit can be

given to the one side, or small shame to the other with regard to this engagement.

Off Rio Janeiro the *Clarisse* overhauled a brig, which, not being in a position to offer any resistance, hauled down her colors to the summoning gun. Surcouf transferred the majority of her crew to the *Clarisse*, and placing one of his officers, a Breton of good old stock, named Dujardin, on board with a dozen of his own men, instructed him to bear up for the Isle of France.

In December, 1798, the *Clarisse* and her prize arrived at Port Louis within a few days of each other. Furnished now with a letter of marque that had been issued by the Minister of Marine in Paris, Surcouf was in a position to stand on his rights before M. Malartie, and his prizes, when taken before the Prize Court, were promptly recognized as "good and lawful." The brig sold for 400,000 francs, an auspicious opening to the cruise.

Having filled up with provisions and water, and added one or two heavy guns to his armament, Surcouf cleared out from the island, and bore away to Sumatra, where English vessels were constantly to be found loading up with pepper. In the Bay of Soosoo he came across two large ships lying at anchor, but the entrance to the port was so intricate that he was unable to get within range before his intention was divined, and the Englishmen, running their guns to the exposed sides of their vessels, opened a heavy fire on the *Clarisse*. This was returned with interest, and under cover of this artillery duel, Surcouf called away the boats, and directed his brother Nicholas to carry the largest vessel by boarding. In the meantime Surcouf worked the *Clarisse* through the shoals, and laying her alongside the other vessel, carried her too. The *Clarisse* had been much

knocked about in the engagement; her spars and rigging had suffered considerably, and she had expended a considerable amount of ammunition. Surcouf therefore determined to convoy his prizes to the Mauritius, and there refit.

It was not until the month of August, 1799, that the *Clarisse* was once more ready for sea, and Surcouf then again stood across to his old cruising-ground, the coasts of Java and Sumatra. Good fortune again attended him. His first prize was a Dane, but as she carried an English cargo she was seized and despatched under a prize-crew to the Isle of France. On the following day, the 2nd of October, he fell in with a Portuguese, which, in addition to a rich cargo of spices, had one hundred and sixteen thousand dollars in specie on board. She, too, hauled down her flag without a show of fight, and was promptly despatched to a French port.

Surcouf now stood up to the Bay of Bengal, his old cruising-ground in 1795, and again met with astonishing good fortune. On the 8th of November, a large native-built ship carrying rice was captured and ransomed, and on the 10th, the *Auspicious*, a merchantman mounting twenty guns, also fell into his hands. Emboldened by his success, Surcouf now cruised off the Sandheads, and picked up several small craft; but on the 30th of December he had a narrow escape from capture at the hands of the *Sybille* frigate, and had to throw several of his guns overboard, and resort to many devices ere he succeeded in shaking off his pursuer. Indeed, whether we take the account culled from the log of the *Sybille* by Mr. Laughton, or that obtained from Surcouf's own lips by Cunat, there is no doubt that night alone saved the *Clarisse* from capture.

In point of fact, Surcouf had grown callous to dan-

ger. The neighbourhood of the Sandheads was very risky cruising-ground, and he brought on himself the chase by the *Sybille*. At dawn on the 30th of December, he had sighted an American ship bound for Calcutta, and had at once endeavored to cut her off. The *Sybille*, lying at anchor, heard Surcouf's summoning gun, and quickly divining the real state of the case, weighed and stood out to sea to relieve the American. Had it not been for the fortunate occurrence of a ship-of-war lying at anchor off the mouth of the Hooghly, Surcouf would doubtless have made one more prize; but again, had it not been for his own consummate seamanship, and the approach of night ere the *Sybille* gained on her foe, Surcouf would have seen the inside of the Calcutta prison, euphemistically styled Number One Chowringhee.

Little daunted by his narrow escape, Surcouf, on the 1st of January, 1800, fell in with and captured a vessel called the *Jane*, bound for Bombay, and as the report of the captain of this vessel to her owners, describing the occurrence, is of considerable interest, I make no hesitation in reproducing it:—

“You will no doubt be surprised to receive a letter from me dated Bembelpatam, but such is the fortune of war. We were captured by the *Clarisse*, French privateer, Monsieur Surcouf commander, on the 1st of January, after a very respectable defence for a country ship. But that you may have a clear view of our proceedings I will begin my narrative from the 30th ult.

“On the morning of that day we passed through Saugor Roads, and in a few hours after we joined the Honourable Company's ships *Manship* and *Lansdowne*, bound to Negapatam and Madras. In the afternoon a boat from the American ship *Mount Vernon* came alongside of all the ships, the officer of which informed

us that they had been chased the day before by a French privateer mounting eighteen guns, but had happily been relieved by the *Sybille* frigate, who pursued the privateer out of the roads.

"This information determined me to keep company with the Indiamen two or three degrees to the south of Point Palmyras, conceiving them to be a very sufficient protection against privateers. On the 31st at 7 a.m. the pilot left us, Point Palmyras bearing west by south twenty-seven leagues. We pursued our course to the south-west in company. Between seven and eight o'clock we were spoken by H.M.S. *Sybille*, returning from the chase of the privateer. Throughout the night we had moderate winds from the eastward. At daylight on the 1st of January the Indiamen were five or six miles ahead. At the same time we saw a strange sail to the windward, standing to the northward, who on perceiving us, bore down with great caution, because, as Monsieur Surcouf afterwards told us, he took one of the ships to be either the *Sybille* or *Nonsuch*, seeing the other ships safe into the sea.

"When I saw the strange sail altered her course I took it for granted that she was the privateer which the American had given intelligence of, and immediately ordered a gun to be fired as a signal to the Indiamen. We continued the signal until about eight o'clock. When the privateer saw that the ships ahead paid no attention to our firing, she hoisted English colours, up studding-sails and royals, and came on with more confidence. At half-past eight she gave us a shot, hauled down the English colours, and hoisted the French national flag. We returned her fire from a 6-pounder which we got down off the deck into a stern port in the great cabin, at the same time carrying on every sail after the India-

men, anxiously hoping that the continual firing would bring them to our assistance; but we looked in vain, for they never made the smallest movement to assist us.

"At nine, the privateer having got very near us, they began to fire grape-shot from the two brass 36-pounder cohorns, which they had mounted forward. At this time it came on a light squall from the southward, which brought the Indiamen directly to windward of us. During the squall we carried a press of sail, and the firing ceased on both sides. The superior sailing of the privateer soon brought her up again, when she commenced a smart fire of musketry and grape-shot from one of the 36-pounder cohorns, the other having been disabled early in the action. At eleven our powder was wholly expended, the last gun we fired being loaded with musket cartridges.

"The Frenchmen then prepared to board us; they triced up graplins to their main and fore-yard arms, and Surcouf gave orders to board, animating his men with a promise of liberty to plunder. Seeing that we were incapable of resisting the force that was ready to be thrown on board of us, I was under the necessity of ordering the colours to be hauled down, and we were taken possession of by an officer from the *Clarisse*, formerly mounting eighteen guns, but now no more than nine 4-pounders, one 9-pounder, and two cohorns already mentioned. She has likewise several bell-mouthed blunderbusses in each top, which we saw them sending down after we were on board.

"Her reduced force is owing to her being chased by the *Sybille* frigate. At that time she threw overboard four 12-pounders, three 9-pounders, with their carriages, and all the spars; sawed through a bulkhead which runs across abaft the main-mast and separates

the officers from the crew; knocked down all the stanchions, and got the axes and saws up to cut off the poop, when unfortunately it fell little wind, and they found they could save themselves without having recourse to this last resource.

"The crew consists of M. Surcouf, his brother, four officers, and a surgeon, sixty Europeans of several nations, ten Kaffirs, eleven Lascars, and a Serang, who entered when he took the *Albion*, and a few Malays. Surcouf sent on board the prize one officer, by trade a tailor, sixteen Frenchmen, and ten Lascars; they were employed until sunset shifting the prisoners and refitting the rigging. All this time the Indiamen were in sight to the southwest. At sunset, Surcouf, viewing them from the poop, requested I would tell him, upon my honour, whether they were Indiamen or not. I repeated what I had said, that they were two Company's ships with whom I had kept company ever since we left the pilot. He replied they were two *Tritons*, alluding to the easy capture which he made of that ship, and said the commanders deserved to be shot.

"This was the universal opinion of the French officers. I fear their conduct will be attended with bad consequences to the Honourable Company's ships, as it has given the Frenchmen a very contemptible opinion of them, and will subject them to many attacks, which a spirited behaviour would have freed them from. The prize made sail about 7 p.m., steering S.S.E., and was accompanied by the privateer until daylight on the 2nd, when they parted, the privateer steering to the westward, and the prize continuing her course.

"On the 4th, we fell in with a Pariah dhow, from Bengal, bound to Madras, which the privateer brought to, took out all her cargo, forty bags of rice, two bales of

twine, a coir cable, and a chest of sugar-candy, and then put the crew of the *Jane* on board her, together with the second officer of the *Auspicious*—a very rich prize which he captured about seven weeks ago, bound from Bengal to Bombay, loaded with 4000 bags of rice, 500 bags of sugar, and 375 bales of piece goods. We landed at Bemblepatam yesterday, from whence I have written you these particulars. Surcouf does not mean to come any more near the Sandheads, being very much afraid of the *Sybille* and *Nonsuch*, but intends to cruise in the latitude of 19° or 20° ; and should he be joined by *La Constance*, as he expects, the trade of Bengal will be entirely cut off, until they have surfeited themselves with prizes, and return to the Mauritius to recruit their crews.”

It is impossible to avoid a tribute of admiration to Surcouf. On the 30th, he narrowly escaped capture at the hands of the *Sybille*, having, as Mr. Laughton says, to heave guns, spare spars, and booms overboard, ease off the lanyards of the shrouds and backstays, knock away the stanchions of the decks and the wedges of the masts, in order to give his ship lightness and elasticity; yet within four-and-twenty hours we find him standing again to the northward and capturing English vessels within a few hours’ sail of the Sandheads.

Audacity like this deserves success.

Having transferred the crew of the *Jane* on board the dhow, Surcouf bore away in the *Clarisse*, with the *Jane* in company, for the Isle of France. His vessel sadly needed refitting, and his armament was much reduced. Despite these drawbacks he made no attempt to shirk combats, for on the 5th of January, overhauling a couple of large American vessels, he succeeded in ranging up alongside and then demanded their surrender.

As these ships mounted sixteen guns each, Surcouf was desirous of avoiding an artillery duel, and laying his jibboom over the poop of the sternmost craft he carried her by boarding. In this affair the *Clarisse* lost her jibboom and fore-topmast, and so was unable to pursue the second American, which, showing the *Clarisse* a clean pair of heels, was soon hull down.

The complement of the *Clarisse* had been much reduced by prize-crews, and Surcouf judged it inexpedient to delay his return to the Mauritius any longer, and with the *Jane* and *Louisiana*, his American prize, ran into Port Louis early in February, 1800.

The *Clarisse* needed a thorough refit, and Surcouf, who was anxious to put to sea as soon as possible, was glad enough to obtain command of a large and more powerfully armed craft, the *Confiance*, which mounted eighteen heavy guns, and besides her crew of 100 men, carried five-and-twenty soldiers of the Bourbon battalion, whose skill as marksmen it was hoped would render them especially valuable.

Through his brother's influence Nicholas Surcouf obtained command of a small privateer, the *Adèle*; but the goddess Fortune failed to smile on the younger brother, for in the month of November, 1800, Nicholas was captured by the sloop-of-war *Albatross*.

The tide of fortune, too, had turned for the poor *Clarisse*. She sailed under another captain, and though she succeeded in taking one valuable prize, whose capture caused a loss of 60,000*l.* to the members of Lloyd's, she was herself taken by H.M.S. *Leopard* in the course of the same year.

Robert Surcouf remained some three months in the Mauritius, superintending the transformation of the *Confiance* from a merchantman into a privateer. The

vessel, according to Cunat, was a perfect specimen of shipbuilding—she was long, sat low in the water, possessed great beam, was very stoutly built; but Surcouf was determined to make her all that a privateer should be. He had experience enough to know what was requisite, and money enough to see that her necessary alterations were carried out. Her decks were considerably strengthened in order to admit of a heavier armament being carried than was usual even with sea-rovers. Two long 18-pounders were mounted fore and aft, and short carronades of the same calibre placed in the waist of the ship as broadside guns, heavier and stouter spars were put into her, and her crew selected with care.

It was not until the month of February that all these preparations were completed, and that Surcouf was ready to recommence his career of plunder. There were many objections to the Bay of Bengal as a cruising-ground; his recent exploits there had aroused the vigilance of the English naval authorities, and it was unlikely he would be able long to evade the frigates which were on the look-out for him. He therefore determined to bear away for the Straits of Sunda, where he might hope to intercept some of the vessels trading in spice with the Dutch islands. This project, however, was nipped in the bud, as the American frigate *Essex* was on the station. Surcouf therefore once more stood to the westward, and putting into Seychelles for provisions and water, established himself off the south-eastern shore of Ceylon.

No spot could have been more favourable for his purpose. The *Confiance* lay in the very fairway of Britain's Eastern commerce, and in the space of a very few weeks fourteen prizes, two of them large heavily-armed indiamen, styled by Cunat "bâtiments de guerre

anglais," fell into his hands. Some of these, despite the order to the contrary, were ransomed; others were despatched to the Mauritius under prize-crews. From some a few extra hands were picked up, but very few in comparison with the numbers necessarily employed in navigating the prizes to a French port, and the consequence was that Surcouf found his crew reduced from something over 200 to about 120 men, when on the 7th of October, 1800, he fell in with the *Kent*, East Indiaman, bound to Calcutta.

By this time Surcouf, emboldened at meeting with few men-of-war, had once again stood up to the northward, and was now cruising off the Sandheads. The *Kent* was a large vessel, heavily armed and manned, and it would appear from contemporary records that Surcouf had some doubt as to whether he should attack her. However, audacity once more carried the day.

He reflected that his men were well disciplined and keenly alive to the advantages of so rich a prize, and it scarcely needed his promise of an hour's pillage to induce the crew of the *Confiance* to enter on the fight. It was no part of Surcouf's plan to allow the *Kent* to guess his real character, or to open on him with her guns, for she was as well armed as the *Confiance*. By running up alongside under false colors, and throwing 100 men on board, he felt confident of success. No organized resistance could be attempted on the deck of a merchantman crowded with women and children, all in the hurry and bustle attendant on the last days of a long voyage. Fortune favoured Surcouf in this instance once again. The *Kent* was more than usually crowded. On the voyage she had fallen in with the *Queen*, another East Indiaman, and had rescued her crew and

passengers from the burning wreck of that unfortunate ship.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1801, an account of the capture of the *Kent* appears under the heading of "East India News," and as the statements of the Bengal correspondent of that magazine corroborate in a great measure those of Monsieur Cunat, I reproduce them:—

"Bengal, October 8th, 1800.

"With great concern we announce the capture of the *Kent*, East Indiaman, yesterday in the Bay of Bengal, off the Sandheads, by the *Confiance*, French privateer of 26 guns and 250 men, after an obstinate engagement of near one hour and forty-five minutes, in which Captain Rivington of the *Kent* was unfortunately killed, bravely defending the Company's property till the last moment of his existence, when he exclaimed, 'Do not give up the ship.' Mr. Cator, a free merchant, also fell covered with wounds. The *Kent* was in twenty-five fathoms of water, and took the *Confiance* for a pilot sloop.

"The crew of the *Confiance* were all armed with sabres and pistols, and had been thrice encouraged with liquor previously to their boarding, after which the fight continued desperately for twenty minutes. General St. John and his family were on board the *Kent*, and appear to have been particularly unfortunate. All his jewels, plate, and baggage had been burnt on board the *Queen*, and he was now almost destined to behold his lovely wife, daughter to the Margravine of Anspach, and his three charming daughters, victims to the lawless excesses of a savage banditti. The gallant Captain Pilkington, the general's aide-de-camp, was severely wounded in defending the general's family.

"The French behaved with a cruelty almost unex-

ampled in sea-fights, giving no quarter, and stabbing with their sabres even the sick in their hammocks. Previous to their boarding, the *Kent* had evidently the advantage, and had the crew been equally armed with offensive weapons, or had more musketry, the *Confiance* would in all probability have paid dearly for the rashness of her attempt. This is the same ship that was beat off formerly by the *Arniston*. Besides the gallant captain, the names of the killed are:—Mr. John Fairly, carpenter, William Bazely, boatswain's mate. Passengers—Messrs. James Richard Barwell, writer, Bengal; John Andrew, assistant surgeon, Madras; Anthony Blaggrave, writer, Bengal; William Puller, writer, Bengal; Robert Moore, cadet, Madras; M. Cator, merchant, and William Franks, free mariner, and a seaman. Total, eleven killed and forty-four wounded.

“The fate of some of the passengers in the *Kent* was singularly distressing. They had taken their departure from Europe in the *Queen*, East Indiaman, which was unfortunately burnt at St. Salvador. The *Kent* happening to be there, Captain Rivington very humanely offered them every accommodation his ship could afford, even to the inconvenience of himself in the ship. They fondly flattered themselves they had reached their destination and their sufferings were at an end, being off the mouth of the Bengal river, when they were taken, as has been already stated. In violation of the rights of humanity as of those of war, the commander of the banditti who took them, pillaged them of every article of wearing apparel, and after having done so, put them, including six ladies, in an open Arab boat, with no other sustenance than a little bad water and some dates. In this dreadful state they continued four days until they reached Calcutta.”

There are one or two evident exaggerations on the part of the correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

In the first place, he accuses Surcouf's men of giving no quarter, yet the losses of the *Kent*, with over 300 souls on board, were but eleven killed and forty-four wounded. In the second place, he states that the ladies were four days in an open boat, yet he dates his letter the very day after the fight. That Surcouf did hand the *Kent* over to pillage is undeniable, Monsieur Cunat acknowledges this, but he also states that sentries were placed over the ladies' cabins, and he mentions a conversation that he had with one of these very sentries, with whom he was in after years a shipmate on the *Adèle* privateer.

Excesses invariably occur in war—even in war carried on between disciplined troops—and it would be manifestly impossible to prevent them being enacted where a privateer crew was concerned.

Whilst giving all praise to the gallantry shown by Captain Rivington and the crew of the *Kent*, it would be obviously unjust to withhold a tribute of admiration from Surcouf. The *Kent* was a large frigate-built ship, far superior in size and armament to the *Confiance*. Indeed it would appear, from Cunat's own account, that the French crew took her to be a vessel of war, and that it needed all Surcouf's powers of persuasion, backed up, doubtless, by copious rations of grog, to induce his men to enter on the combat.

Could Rivington have kept the *Confiance* at a distance, and so avoided boarding, he would undoubtedly have escaped; but Surcouf knew full well that in an artillery combat he would have all the worst of it, and so he strove his utmost to shorten this phase of the fight, but even when alongside, the captain of the *Kent* ma-

nœuvred so skilfully, that nearly an hour elapsed between the moment the first shot was fired and the actual boarding. Had it not been for the men of the Bourbon Militia serving as marines on the *Confiance*, it is possible the *Kent* might even then have driven the boarders off their decks, but these men, stationed in the tops of the privateer, kept up such a harassing and well-directed fire on the defenders of the *Kent*, that they were at last compelled to desist from working the upper deck guns, and on their captain being killed from the explosion of a hand-grenade thrown from the maintop of the *Confiance*, the men, without a leader, abandoned the upper deck.

Below they were practically powerless, the halyards of the gun-ports were cut, rendering the guns useless, and volleys of musketry poured down the hatches effectually prevented any attempt at organized resistance being carried out. Without cutlasses, and with but a small proportion of small arms, there was but little hope of the main deck being defended, and the French by a determined charge, drove the seamen of the *Kent* from point to point, until at last they took refuge in the orlop deck. Then, and not till then, the chief officer surrendered. He had fought on long after all hope of success was over, then seeing the condition of the French crew, and knowing that the lives of many women and children depended on his not stirring the passions of his opponents to the utmost, he surrendered, nothing to be said in disparagement of his conduct. He had fought the ship gallantly, and though we might have hoped for different results, there is no doubt that the untrained crew of a merchant-vessel must always be at the mercy of a body of trained men, numerically their inferiors.

Had the *Kent* been as well furnished with small arms

as she was with heavy guns, the issue might—nay, probably would—have been different. Surcouf and his comrades knew well the weak point in the arming of merchant-vessels, and we find them always endeavouring by stratagem to range up alongside under false colors and settle the question by boarding. In this they were unfortunately, as a rule, only too successful.

Having transferred a certain number of the prisoners captured on board the *Kent* to a native craft, which agreed to carry them to Calcutta, Surcouf, with the remainder distributed between the *Confiance* and her prize, set sail for the Mauritius, where he arrived without further adventure.

There he found instructions to proceed to France with the *Confiance*, and after a few weeks spent in settling up the pecuniary affairs relative to the disposal of his prizes by the local Admiralty Courts, and in refitting his own ship, which had suffered considerably in her engagement with the *Kent*, he set sail on the homeward voyage. In the Atlantic he fell in with, chased, and captured a Portuguese vessel, the *Ebro*, mounting eighteen guns; she struck without showing fight. Unwilling to undertake the risk of convoying the *Ebro* through the cordon of English vessels which so closely blockaded the French coasts, Surcouf gladly admitted his prize to ransom, for a bond drawn by the captain on her Lisbon owners, for 2000*l*.

The wisdom of this was apparent, for before entering Rochelle, Surcouf himself narrowly escaped capture, and had to heave his guns and spare spars overboard in order to lighten his ship. The capture of the *Confiance* would indeed have been a piece of rare good fortune for any of his Majesty's vessels, for in announcing her arrival the *Moniteur* states:—

“Le 13^{me} est entré à La Rochelle un bâtiment, la *Confiance*, venant de l’Île de France, dont la cargaison est évaluée à deux millions” (about eighty thousand pounds sterling).

And now Mademoiselle Marie Blaize was prepared to reward her hero with her hand. His fortune was presumably sufficient to satisfy the demands of Monsieur le père, for at the end of the following month there is an entry of his marriage in the registers of the Mairie at St. Malo. Surcouf settled down in his native town, and the peace of Amiens putting an end to all chance of further distinction in his own particular line, he prepared to spend the rest of his days in well-deserved prosperity. Possibly, too, the fact that Surcouf now possessed a commission in the Republican navy may have influenced Monsieur Blaize (the Blaizes have ever been staunch republicans), for in June, 1800, prior to taking the *Confiance* to sea, the Minister of Marine, anxious to secure the services to the state of such a skilful seaman, had granted a commission as *enseigne de vaisseau* to Citizen Robert Surcouf.

Thus at last, like Cassard and Jean Bart and Duguay Trouin before him, the whilom privateer became an officer in the service of the state. But under the Republic the whole condition of affairs was much altered; the navy was no longer a close borough, service in which was rigidly reserved for the nobility. It was thrown open alike to gentle and simple, and any sturdy seaman who displayed sufficiently advanced views was sure of advancement in the commissioned grades.

Many are the amusing tales told of Surcouf during his stay ashore. His contempt for all *shore-going* officials more than once brought him within the verge of

trouble, but he had some warm admirers in Paris, and these contrived to keep him from serious harm.

On the renewal of the war with England, Surcouf, who had been one of the first recipients of the Legion of Honor, was sent for to Paris and offered by Napoleon the command of a small squadron for the purpose of destroying England's commerce in eastern waters; but as the French East Indian Fleet of which the squadron was to form a part was under the command of Admiral Linois, whose conduct and capacity were not deserving of the highest confidence, Surcouf refused the honour, even though the commission as *capitaine de frigate* in the French navy was to accompany it.

Surcouf was never weary of impressing upon the naval authorities of France, the necessity of avoiding general engagements. Light vessels, swift vessels, and small vessels in abundance, was the tenor of his cry. Strike at England's commerce; pour out your cruisers in every sea; let them find shelter in every colonial harbour.

A powerfully-worded memorandum on the subject which he submitted to Napoleon was the signal of his summons to Paris, and he pointed out to Napoleon's satisfaction that France would gain more by the destruction of England's merchant fleets than by the sinking of her ships of war. The idea was one which readily fitted in with Napoleon's views, and he at once proceeded to give effect to them by offering Surcouf the command of one of these light squadrons, and by the issue of fresh rules for the guidance of the naval commandants at each port in the matter of granting commissions to privateers.

Although unwilling to serve under Linois, or indeed in any position where his sphere of usefulness could

be interfered with by the commands of superiors, Surcouf was not averse to fit out privateers at his own expense. Three we know of—one under his brother Nicholas, the *Caroline*, he put on the Indian station, two smaller craft he kept cruising in the Channel. At last, in 1806, on the news arriving of Admiral Linois' capture in the *Marengo*, Surcouf determined to take to the sea once more. It is probable that his decision was due to some ill-feeling between the corsair captain and the admiral.

Surcouf had a knack of disagreeing with those placed in authority over him. Monsieur Malartie, the Governor of the Mauritius, and Bléchamp, Commissaire of Marine at St. Malo, are both instances of this, and it is extremely likely that Surcouf, during his many cruises in Indian waters, had in some way fallen foul of Linois. At any rate, within a few weeks of the news of the admiral's capture reaching France, Surcouf purchased a fine craft of 400 tons, and naming her the *Revenant*, made his preparations for a return to the scene of his former successes.

In his capture of the *Kent*, Surcouf had seen the true value of discipline, not discipline as we understand the word—high military training and prompt obedience, giving cohesion, yet flexibility; inculcating self-reliance on the individual and confidence in comrades and commander—but such elementary discipline as could be enforced on men hastily got together in an outlying dependency. With the *Revenant* Surcouf determined on acting in a different manner. He carefully selected as many men as he was able from the hardy fishing population of St. Malo and its neighbourhood. A large proportion of these had served in vessels belonging to Surcouf, and all were acquainted with him. They were

made aware of the conditions under which they were to serve, and in return for the irksome restraints of a discipline to which French seamen in those republican days were quite unaccustomed, they were promised liberal pay and still more liberal prize-money.

Surcouf fully realized the danger he ran in attacking a powerfully armed Indiaman. Many of these vessels carried a far heavier armament than he could trust on board the *Revenant*, and he knew that his only chance of success lay in coming at once to close quarters, and then carrying his opponent by boarding. To do this his men needed drill and discipline; many of them were raw fishermen all untrained in the use of arms, and it was necessary to establish a school of instruction.

During the outward voyage the hands underwent several hours' drill daily in sword exercise and musketry practice at the hands of officers specially selected for their knowledge. It must not be inferred, however, that the crew of the *Revenant* were all, or indeed in a great measure, men who could be thus easily moulded. There were decrees existing which forbade the entertainment on board privateers of more than a very small proportion of men borne on the *Inscription Maritime*, and though Surcouf, by reason of his position as *enseigne de vaisseau*, and the influence he possessed in Paris, was able to evade these regulations to a certain extent, yet his crew comprised a heterogeneous mass of men from every country and every profession, with a good sprinkling of able-bodied seamen and some excellent officers as a foundation on which to work.

The early days of the voyage were spent in working the crew into shape, though the monotony of this form of entertainment was varied by the capture of several small prizes. A Moorish vessel mounting sixteen guns

was rash enough to offer resistance, and after a short encounter, in which the *Revenants* showed their mettle, was forced to strike her colours. Not caring to weaken his crew at the very outset of his cruise, Surcouf admitted all these prizes to ransom, and when, in the month of August, the *Revenant* reached Mauritius, Surcouf found himself at the head of a body of men whom Cunat describes as "true sons of Armorica."

The *Revenant* was warmly welcomed in the island, the inhabitants of which remembered how her commander had on a previous occasion relieved them from threatened famine. Once again scarcity stared them in the face; the blockade of the English cruisers was strictly and methodically carried out, and native vessels laden with provisions rarely escaped capture. Surcouf, it was felt, would put an end to all this, and he did so. In September, having filled up with water, he stood out to his old cruising-ground, and by the end of the year had carried into Port Louis *fourteen* vessels laden with rice.

The pecuniary value of these prizes was considerable, but besides putting money into the pockets of his crew, their success had the effect of strengthening the bonds of discipline, and thus rendering the *Revenant* a valuable addition to the colonial defences.

We can realize the losses occasioned by the *Revenant* when we remember that the merchants of Calcutta, in a memorial to the Admiralty, dated the 10th December, 1807, state that the sums paid by the insurance offices in Calcutta alone for losses during September and October of that year amounted to 291,256l!

A new system was now inaugurated by Sir Edward Pellew (afterwards Lord Exmouth), the commander-in-chief on the East Indian station, and a succession

of severe blows was struck at the French cruisers. The *Bellonà*, one of the most successful privateers, was captured by the *Powerful*, 74; the *Piedmontaise*, a French frigate, which in company with the *Revenant* had inflicted much damage on English shipping, was very gallantly taken by the *San Fiorenzo*, a Spanish prize, converted into an English man-of-war, and commanded by Captain G. N. Hardinge, a brother of the celebrated Viscount Hardinge, at one time commander-in-chief of the army.

These losses so crippled the naval resources of the island, that the governor, availing himself of his prerogative, pressed the *Revenant* into Government service, and appointed Surcouf to the command of an inferior vessel, the *Semillante*, an old man-of-war. Whilst the dispute between Surcouf and Decaen the governor of the island was at its height, the *Revenant* proceeded to sea under the command of Monsieur Potier, an old shipmate and tried friend of Surcouf's, who, indeed, had succeeded him in the *Confiance* in 1804.

Under Potier the *Revenant* was no less successful. Off the coast of Natal she brought to action a large Portuguese vessel homeward bound from Goa.

The *Conception de S. Antonio* was one of the finest vessels then afloat. She measured 1500 tons, and carried thirty-four guns on her main-deck; her crew consisted of 400 men, and besides a number of passengers, she had a detachment of fifty soldiers on board. Her commander was a captain in the Portuguese navy, many of her men were trained gunners, and she was altogether a very formidable opponent for the *Revenant*.

Surcouf, it is true, had no direct part or lot in her capture, but we may surely assume that it was to his careful training the success of that day's fight was due.

Potier had full information as to the defensive power of the Portuguese, and he felt that it would be unwise to attempt to carry her by boarding in the face of the well-drilled detachment of soldiers on board. He therefore determined to carry on an artillery duel, and, thanks to the superior manœuvring power and sailing quality of the *Revenant*, was enabled to take up and maintain a position on the big vessel's quarter, and to rake her with his broadsides, whilst exposing himself only to the fire of the stern chasers of the Portuguese.

Fortune or good marksmanship came once more to the aid of the *Revenant*. An explosion on board the *Conception de St. Antonio* occasioning heavy loss of life and much structural damage compelled the Portuguese captain to strike his colors, and in the early days of June the little *Revenant*, with her huge prize under convoy, reached the Mauritius.

This new and striking proof of the value of the *Revenant* only strengthened Monsieur Decaen in his determination to press her into Government service, and in order to rid himself of Surcouf he gave him positive orders to convey the Portuguese prisoners captured on the *Conception de St. Antonio* to France on the *Semillante*. To this Surcouf strongly objected; the crew of the *Semillante*, now christened the *Charles*, consisted of as unpromising a band of ruffians as it was desirable to command. Men of all nations who, glad to escape the usual lot of prisoners of war, had volunteered their services to the governor of the island. Amongst them were many Portuguese, and, as Surcouf pointed out, it would be easy enough for these men to rise on the officers, and to carry the *Semillante* into a Portuguese port.

M. Decaen was inexorable, he was anxious to get rid of Surcouf at any price, and at last, by threatening to

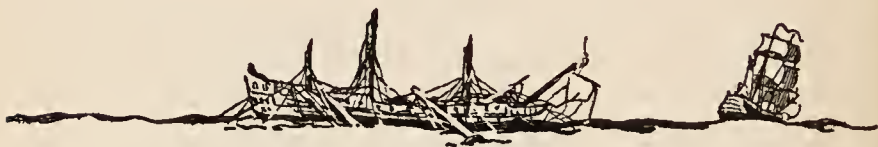
ship him in a subordinate capacity on a vessel-of-war, he succeeded. On the 21st of November, 1807, the *Charles* cleared out of Port Louis, but Surcouf still had a card up his sleeve, and this he determined to play rather than run the risk of being carried a prisoner of war into a foreign port. As soon as he got clear of the harbour, he called the pilot-boat alongside, and crowding her with the major part of his prisoners, carried on all sail, and was soon beyond reach of pursuit.

The voyage home was eventful enough, and Surcouf more than once ran narrow escape of capture. He, however, thanks to good seamanship, succeeded in shaking off his pursuers and arrived safely at St. Malo in February, 1809.

This was Surcouf's last cruise, but he still interested himself largely in privateering, and such was the confidence reposed in his judgment by the merchants of Brittany, that they were willing enough to aid him largely in his adventures. It is said that at one time he possessed no fewer than nineteen vessels all engaged in preying upon our commerce. The more famous of these, inasmuch as their names have been handed down to us by Surcouf's biographer, were the *Auguste*, *Dorade*, *Biscayenne*, *Edouard*, *Espadon*, *Ville de Caen*, *Adolphe*, and *Renard*.

On the peace of 1814, these vessels were for the most part turned into peaceful traders, but the larger ones were despatched to Surcouf's old cruising grounds, the Mauritius, and actively and satisfactorily employed in trading between Madagascar and Bourbon, with the "*free laborers*" of the great African island. In fact Surcouf, in his latter days, was largely engaged in the slave trade: a calling which was extensively followed by some of the wealthiest Breton merchants.

A few words are due to the *Revenant*. Leaving Mauritius under the command of Lieutenant Morice of the French navy, she was captured by the *Modeste*, and being renowned as a fast-sailing craft was commissioned by Sir Edward Pellew as the *Victor*, and the command given to Captain Edward Stopford. As a British man-of-war her career was short, for in November, 1809, she once more changed her nationality, being taken by the French frigate *Bellona*; she kept her new name, however, and as such was surrendered to the English at the capture of the *Mauritius* in the following year.



THE END

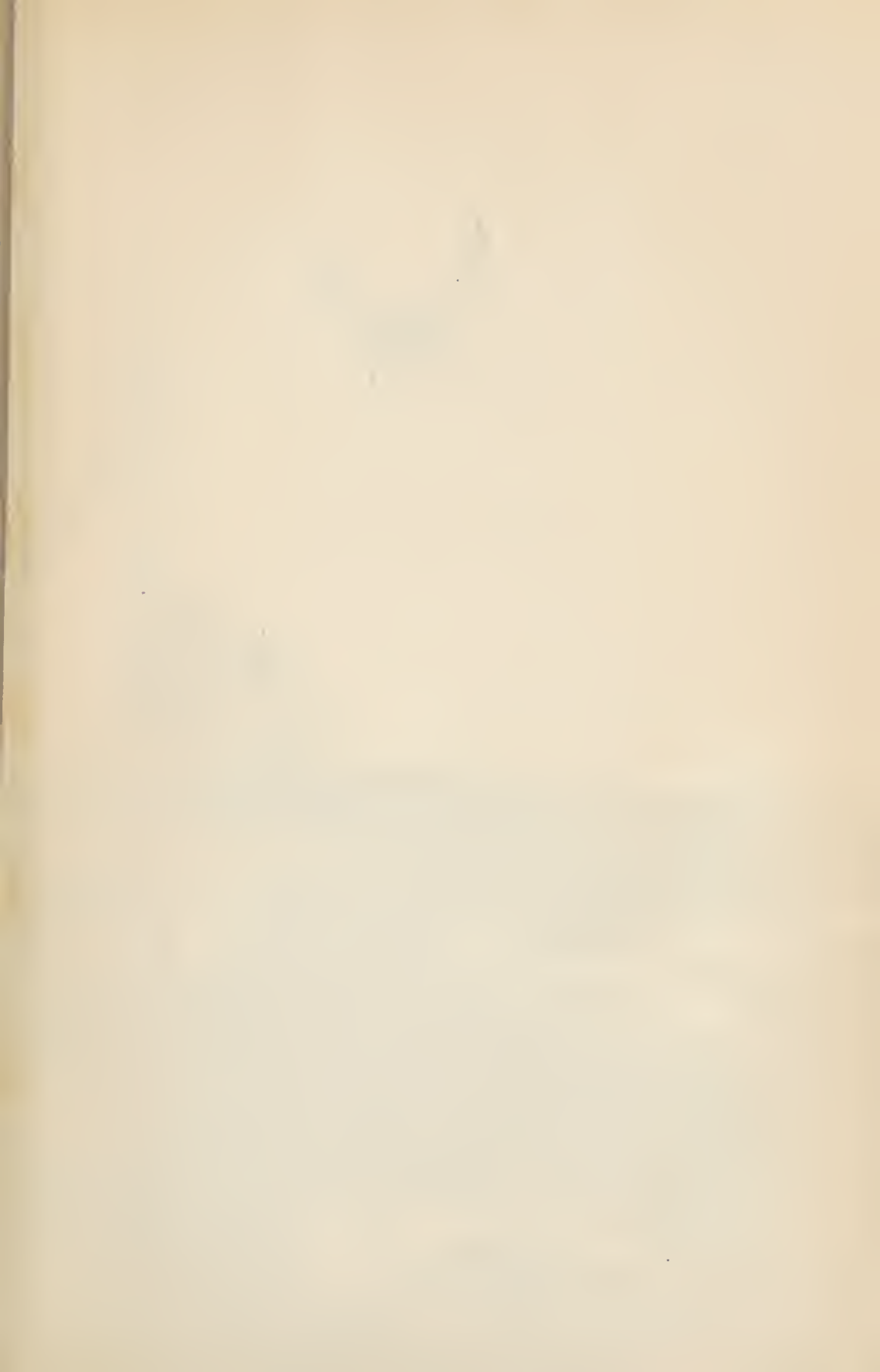


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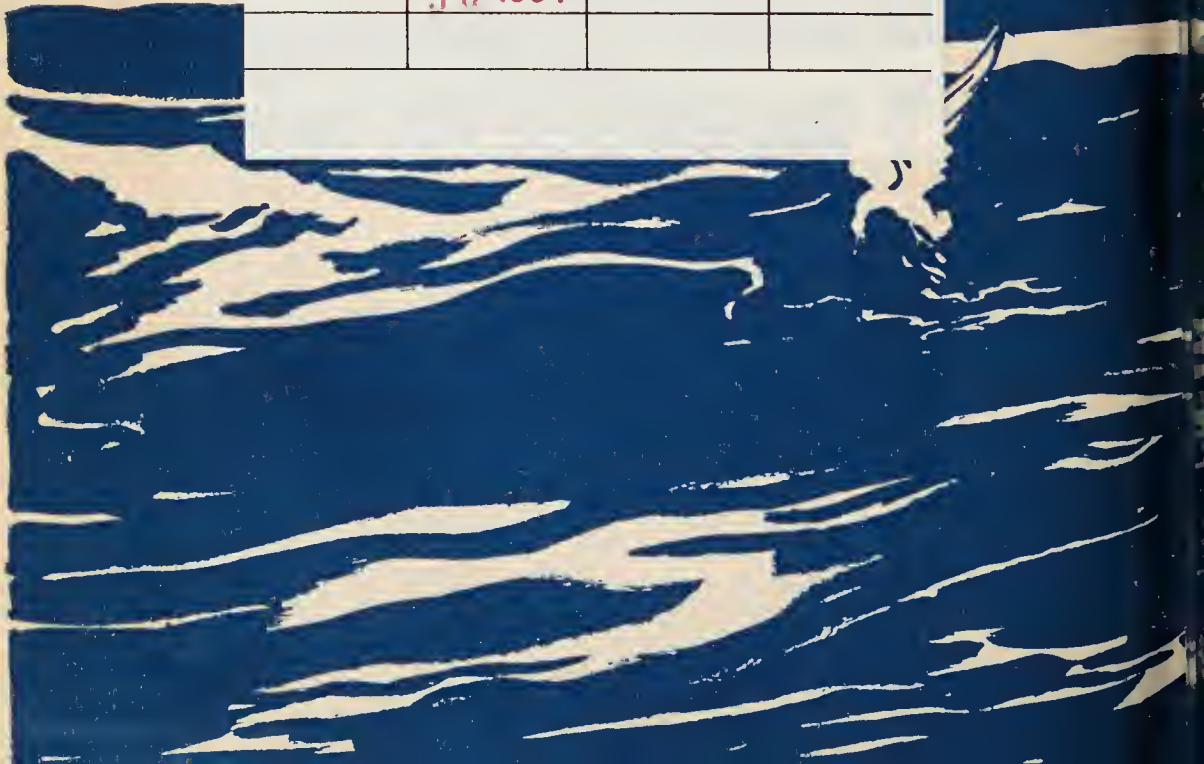
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